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ABSTRACT

This Kids Count Data Book examines statewide trends in the well-being of Alaska's children. The statistical portrait is based on key indicators in six areas: (1) infancy, including prenatal care, low birth weight, and infant mortality; (2) economic well-being, including child poverty, children with no parent working full-time, and teen births; (3) education, including dropout rates, teens not in school and not working, and school achievement; (4) child safety, including child death rate, teen violent death rate, and child abuse and neglect; (5) juvenile crime, including arrests for violent crimes; and (6) health risks, including carrying a weapon, sexual activity, and tobacco use. Following an introduction describing the uniqueness of Alaska and summarizing the report's findings, the report details the indicators in the areas mentioned above. Among the findings, the report indicates that Alaska fared better than the national average in percentage of babies with low birth weight, births to teens, percentage of teens who drop out of school, and child poverty rates. Alaska fared at or near the national average for infant mortality rate, percentage of children with no parent working full-time, and percentage of single-parent families. Alaska fared worse than the national average for teen violent death rate, child death rate, and percentage of teens not in school and not working. The report concludes with suggested family resources and information on the indicator data sources. (KB)

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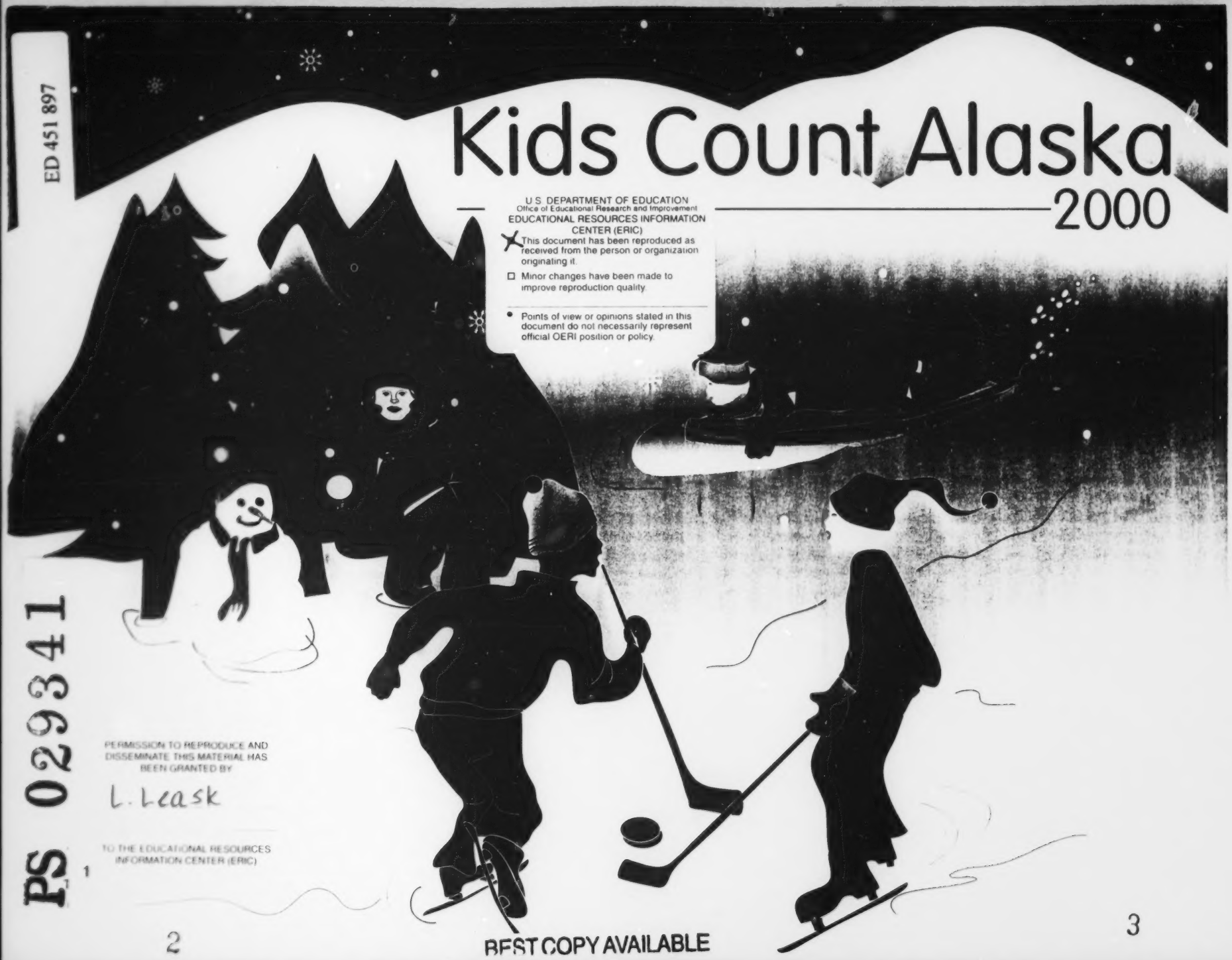

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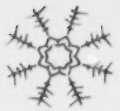

Kids Count is a nationwide program funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The national program collects and publicizes information about the well-being of America's children. The Casey Foundation also sponsors state programs, including *Kids Count Alaska*.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

When the *Kids Count Alaska* program began in 1995, we established an advisory council made up of people familiar with the problems Alaska's children face. The council has helped guide the program and select indicators specific to Alaska.

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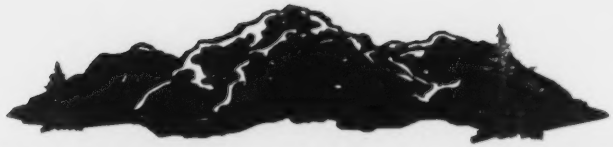

In becoming acquainted with Alaska . . . one is not always able to avoid some rugged experiences. The territory is big and beautiful, but it is not always friendly. Its torrential rivers, its mountainous seas, and its winter storms are not to be trifled with.

Frank Dufresne, *Alaska's Animals and Fishes*
Portland, Oregon: Binsford and Mort, 1946

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Introduction

Introduction
Highlights

There is no man living who knows the whole of Alaska . . . . So when a man from Nome speaks of Alaska he means his part of Alaska, the Seward Peninsula. When a man from Valdez or Cordova speaks of Alaska he means the Prince William Sound country. When a man from Juneau speaks of Alaska he means the southeastern coast. Alaska is not one country but many, with different climates, different resources, different problems, different populations . . . .

Hudson Stuck, *10,000 Miles with a Dog Sled*
Published 1914; Reissued 1988.
Prescott, Arizona: Wolfe Publishing Company

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT ALASKA?

Growing up in Alaska is in some ways different from—and in some ways the same as—growing up elsewhere in America.

Alaska is huge, geographically isolated, and sparsely populated. The state spans 375 million acres, but has only about 630,000 residents. In vast expanses no one lives at all.

Roads link communities in southcentral and interior Alaska, but many places are accessible only by water or air. To a larger extent than in any other state, children in Alaska are used to flying—flying outside Alaska to visit relatives or take vacations, and flying within Alaska between the many communities not connected by roads.

Half the terrain in Alaska is tundra, and mountains and glaciers cover large areas. Because Alaska is far north, much of the state is underlain by permafrost—permanently frozen ground. In winter, temperatures in some parts of the state can drop to 60 degrees below zero, and the sun rises for only a few hours (and in the most northerly area, it disappears entirely for months). But in June the sun barely sets, and temperatures can easily be 100 degrees higher than in winter.

Alaska can be stunningly beautiful—but it is also dangerous. The weather can take a sudden turn for the worse at any time of the year, and the terrain is often unforgiving. Alaskans and visitors enjoy the state's long coastlines and thousands of rivers and lakes—but those waterways injure or kill a number of adults and children every year.

Still, despite Alaska's different geography and climate, most children here grow up with about the same amenities and services as other American children enjoy. Nearly half of Alaskan children live in Anchorage, and most others live in a few other cities and towns in southcentral, interior, and southeast Alaska.

But about 15 percent of Alaska's children—mostly Alaska Native—live in hundreds of small villages where life is much different. Many villages still lack adequate water and sewer systems, and several dozen still rely on honey buckets. Over the past decade, state and federal agencies have made a lot of progress toward bringing safe sanitation systems to rural Alaska, but it's an enormous and ongoing job. Part of the problem is that Arctic conditions require specially adapted systems that are very expensive to build and operate.

Cash incomes in most villages are low. Jobs are scarce and unemployment is high. In fact, roughly two thirds of small Alaska Native villages are exempt from recent welfare reforms that limit benefit payments to five years: there are simply not enough local jobs to allow everyone to become self-sufficient.

At the same time, costs of living in the villages are also high, partly because it's so expensive to get supplies to small, remote locations. Wild fish and game remain important sources of food.

Statistics show that Alaska's Native people—including children—are at much higher risk of dying through accident, suicide, and homicide than are other Americans.

In this data book, we look not only at the indicators of children's well-being that the *Kids Count* program uses nationwide, but also at indicators reflecting Alaska's unique conditions.

WHAT IS KIDS COUNT ALASKA?

The *Kids Count Alaska* program is part of a nationwide effort, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, to collect and publicize information about children's health, safety, and economic status. The foundation publishes an annual data book, reporting national trends in 10 basic measures of children's well-being. The table on the facing page compares the well-being of children in Alaska and throughout the U.S. in 1997, based on those measures.

Kids Count Alaska's goals are to:

- Select additional indicators important to Alaska
- Report regional figures for indicators, where available
- Distribute information about the status of Alaska's children to all those whose work involves children
- Create an informed public, motivated to help children
- Enhance efforts to improve the lives of Alaska's children and families

CRITERIA AND REGIONS

The map on page 12 shows *Kids Count Alaska* regions. The table on page 13 shows the number of children in Alaska (by age, sex, and race) and how the proportions of children at different ages changed during the past decade.

In choosing indicators specifically for *Kids Count Alaska*, we used criteria similar to those the national *Kids Count* program uses to select its indicators. The data and the indicators share some characteristics.

- **Reliability.** All the data come from government agencies and have been previously released in other forms.
- **Availability and consistency over time and across regions**. Measurements should be consistently available and comparable over time and across regions.
- **Continuing availability.** We want a series of indicators tracking changes in the well-being of children year after year, not just sporadically.
- **Measurement of outcomes or well-being.** We focus on outcomes. Dollars spent on education or welfare do not reflect the actual well-being of children.
- **Clarity.** We want to reach everyone with a stake in children's well-being.
- **Unambiguous interpretation.** If the value of an indicator changes, we want to be sure there is widespread agreement about how the change affects kids.

ALASKA AND U.S. AVERAGE, 1997 NATIONAL KIDS COUNT INDICATORS

	U.S. Rate	U.S. No. of Cases	Alaska Rate	Alaska No. of Cases	Alaska Rank in U.S.
Alaska Better Than National Average					
Babies with Low Birth Weight	7.5%	291,154	5.9%	584	5th
Births to teens (per 1,000 females 15-17)[a]	32	180,154	25	370	19th
Percentage of teens (ages 16-19) who drop out of school	10%	1,467,000	8%	3,000	15th
Percentage of children living in poverty[b]	21%	14,463,500	15%	29,800	14th
Alaska At or Near National Average					
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	7.2	28,045	7.5	75	30th
Percentage of children with no parent working full-time[c]	27%	19,699,000	27%	60,000	25th
Percentage of single-parent families	27%	9,276,000	26%	23,000	18th
Alaska Worse Than National Average					
Teen violent death rate (per 100,000 teens 15-19)[d]	58	11,023	85	44	48th
Child death rate (per 100,000 children 1-14)[d]	25	13,562	42	62	50th
Percentage of teens not in school and not working	9%	1,333,000	11%	4,000	40th

[a] Before 1993, this indicator measured the rate of births to teenage girls 15-19. The Alaska regional figures later in this book are based on that previous definition.

[b] Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's poverty threshold figures, which are not adjusted for Alaska's higher living costs and may underestimate poverty in Alaska.

[c] The national *Kids Count* program added this indicator in its 1999 data book. We have not calculated regional breakdowns for Alaska because the definition of full-time employment does not take into account different employment patterns in rural Alaska.

[d] Remember that these rates are based on small numbers of deaths and can therefore fluctuate sharply from year to year. The 1997 Alaska teen violent death rate is a revised figure from the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics.

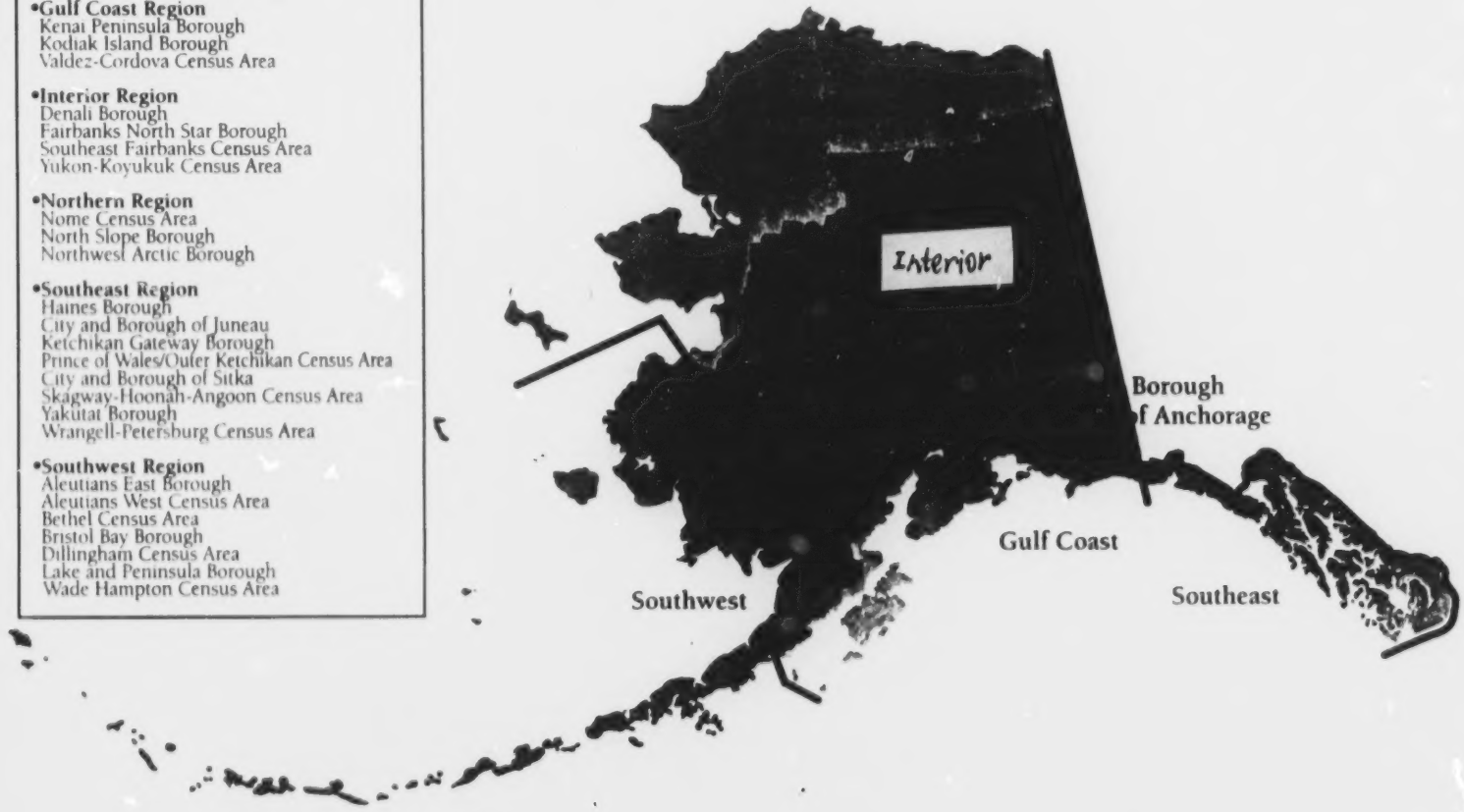
Note: Alaska figures in this table may differ from later figures in the regional graphs. The figures above are from the national *Kids Count* program; our regional figures may be based on different years and are sometimes measured differently.

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Kids Count Data Book*, 2000

Kids Count Alaska Regions

Boroughs and Census Areas, by Region

- **Municipality of Anchorage**
- **Matanuska-Susitna Borough**
- **Gulf Coast Region**
  - Kenai Peninsula Borough
  - Kodiak Island Borough
  - Valdez-Cordova Census Area
- **Interior Region**
  - Denali Borough
  - Fairbanks North Star Borough
  - Southeast Fairbanks Census Area
  - Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area
- **Northern Region**
  - Nome Census Area
  - North Slope Borough
  - Northwest Arctic Borough
- **Southeast Region**
  - Haines Borough
  - City and Borough of Juneau
  - Ketchikan Gateway Borough
  - Prince of Wales/Outer Ketchikan Census Area
  - City and Borough of Sitka
  - Skagway-Hoonah-Angoon Census Area
  - Yakutat Borough
  - Wrangell-Petersburg Census Area
- **Southwest Region**
  - Aleutians East Borough
  - Aleutians West Census Area
  - Bethel Census Area
  - Bristol Bay Borough
  - Dillingham Census Area
  - Lake and Peninsula Borough
  - Wade Hampton Census Area



Note: These regions are the same as those the Alaska Department of Labor uses for reporting population and employment.

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INTERPRETING THE INDICATORS

(ADAPTED FROM UTAH KIDS COUNT 1999 DATA BOOK)

The indicators are presented as either percentages or rates per 1,000 or per 100,000. Using rates—and percentages are simply rates per 100—allows us to compare groups or track trends over time.

Keep in mind that the base rates differ among indicators. Generally we use a smaller base (the rate per 100) for the most common events and a larger base (rates per 1,000 or 100,000) for less common events.

This allows us to present the rates in whole numbers, which are easier to understand than fractions. For instance, we present the poverty indicator as a percentage—because poverty is unfortunately widespread. In contrast, the numbers of children who die each year are (mercifully) much smaller, so we present the child death rate in numbers per 100,000.

We calculate rates by taking the number of incidents in any given category (for example, the number of high-school dropouts), dividing it by the total number of children in the category (all teenagers age 16-19 in the state), and multiplying—depending on the base—by 100, 1,000, 10,000 or 100,000. So, for example, say 5 teenagers out of a total of 500 dropped out of school:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Dropouts}}{\text{Total teenagers 16-19}} \times \text{Multiplier}$$

$$\frac{5 \text{ dropouts}}{500 \text{ teenagers}} \times 1{,}000 = 10 \text{ dropouts per } 1{,}000 \text{ teenagers}$$

$$\frac{5 \text{ dropouts}}{500 \text{ teenagers}} \times 100 = 1 \text{ percent of teenagers drop out}$$

When the population we're studying is small—as it is in many regions of Alaska—small changes in numbers can sharply affect rates. For example, say 2 of 75 children in a region die in a given year. That would be a child death rate of 26 per 1,000 for that region. But if only 1 child of 75 dies the next year, the child death rate would drop to 13 per 1,000.

This seemingly large drop is a result of statistical variation, and the magnitude of the

ALASKA'S CHILDREN BY AGE, SEX, AND RACE, 1990 AND 1999

	1990			1999		
	Total	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**
Total Alaska Population	550,043	289,868	260,175	622,000	323,687	298,313
Children by Age	**Number**	**Percent**		**Number**	**Percent**	
Under 1	11,963	6.6%	6,109	5,854	9,953	4.9%	5,089	4,864
1-4	44,014	24.5%	22,616	21,398	41,158	20.3%	21,199	19,959
5-9	51,508	28.6%	26,543	24,965	55,574	27.4%	28,287	27,287
10-14	42,939	23.9%	22,333	20,606	56,006	27.6%	28,818	27,188
15	7,652	4.3%	4,021	3,631	10,534	5.2%	5,373	5,161
16	7,341	4.1%	3,786	3,555	10,589	5.2%	5,470	5,119
17	7,453	4.1%	3,887	3,566	9,829	4.8%	5,191	4,638
18	7,069	3.9%	3,834	3,235	9,325	4.6%	4,831	4,494
Total 18 and under	**179,939**	**100%**	**93,129**	**86,810**	**202,968**	**100%**	**104,258**	**98,710**
Children 18 and Under By Race								
White	128,522	23.4%	66,877	61,645	138,289	22.2%	71,205	67,084
Alaska Native	36,337	6.6%	18,497	17,840	45,163	7.3%	23,125	22,038
Black	8,389	1.5%	4,336	4,053	9,258	1.5%	4,755	4,503
Asian/Pacific Islander	6,691	1.2%	3,419	3,272	10,258	1.6%	5,173	5,085

Note: The racial breakdowns used throughout this publication are those of the Alaska Department of Labor and the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Persons of Hispanic origin can be of any race. The Alaska Native category includes other Native Americans; numbers of other Native Americans in Alaska are small.

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drop is exaggerated because the denominator (75) is so small. To minimize chance variations, we use 5-year averages for most of our Alaska indicators. This allows us to use larger denominators in those regions where the populations are small, enhancing the reliability of the resulting figures.

When appropriate, we also talk about the actual number of events in a given period, to keep the rates in perspective. While rates are useful for making comparisons and following trends, policymakers rely on actual numbers to determine caseloads or measure other service requirements.

Statistics alone clearly won't improve the well-being of Alaska's children. But they can help Alaskans make informed decisions about how to improve children's lives. To help readers who are motivated to take the next step—action to help children—we also include information about programs and services available for Alaska's children and families.

Words of Caution

A few important points about the indicators presented in this data book are worth emphasizing at the outset.

- **Indicators don't measure the effectiveness of particular programs**. They are broad indications of social conditions rather than specific measures of program performance.
- **Regional indicators are mostly averages for the period 1993-1997.** We used more recent data when available. Some regional information is collected only once every 10 years, during the national census. Some data are collected annually, allowing us to calculate 5-year averages. In small populations like Alaska's, indicators can fluctuate sharply from year to year—so averages over several years give a more accurate picture.
- **Not all areas or communities within a region have the same indicator levels as the region as a whole**.

Finally, we've tried to compile the latest and most accurate figures available on children's well-being at the state and regional levels. However, there are limits on the accuracy of these figures.

Some of the indicators are based on samples of the population—and although the samples are chosen to represent characteristics of the entire population, samples are always subject to error.

For other indicators, regional data weren't available, or we couldn't present the data, because the numbers were so small we couldn't calculate meaningful rates.

Organization of the Data Book

Next we briefly highlight some of the data presented in this book. Then we present the indicators in six sections: Infancy, Economic Well-Being, Education, Children in Danger, Juvenile Crime in Alaska, and Health Risks. Notes for the indicators in each section are at the end of the section.

We also provide information on resources available for Alaska's children and families—resources that are intended to help correct some of the problems the indicators show. We conclude with documentation of the indicators—sources, frequency, and availability of breakdowns by sex, age, and regions.

Here we highlight some of the data presented in this book reflecting conditions—both that need improving and that are improving—among Alaska's children and teenagers.

Snowmachine Accidents on the Rise

• *Alaska has no safety standards for children (or adults) driving snowmachines—and serious snowmachine-related accidents seem to be on the rise.*

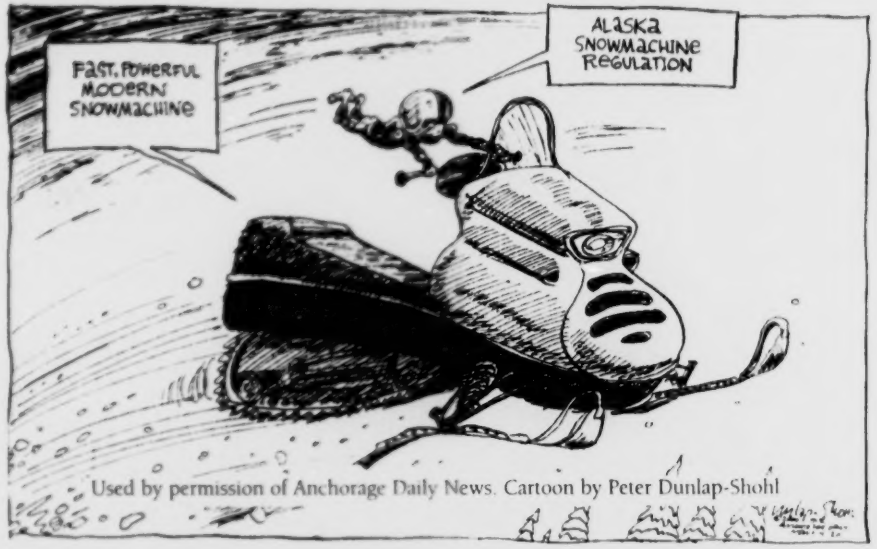
Three Alaskan teenagers (and 18 adults) had died in snowmachine-related accidents by midway through the winter of 2000-2001. Three teenagers died the winter before. The Alaska Trauma Registry reports that from 1991 through 1997, more than 200 children under 18 were admitted to hospitals following snowmachine accidents —including 42 children with brain injuries and 2 with spinal damage.[1]

A recent analysis found that in the early 1990s, Alaska's rate of death (including deaths among both adults and children) from snowmachine accidents was as much as 10 times higher than rates in other northern states.[2]

Snowmachine accidents don't kill or injure as many Alaskan children as do car crashes and drownings—but snowmachine-related accidents seem to be on the rise. And we at least try to make children safer in cars and boats. State law requires licensed drivers to be at least 16; it requires children to be in car seats or to wear seatbelts; it requires motorcycle drivers to wear helmets. We provide driver's education for young drivers. Recreational boaters are required to carry life vests and to meet other safety standards.

In contrast, Alaska allows people of any age to drive snowmachines—which can have as much horsepower as cars, easily reach speeds above 60 miles per hour, and are driven on unpredictable terrain. The state sets no snowmachine speed limits and has no provisions for driver's education or safety training.

Avalanches, collisions, falls, hypothermia, open water, overflow, running out of gas–it's dangerous out there. The least we can do is provide–and require–some education about the risk.
Anchorage Daily News, February 12, 2001



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Demand for Child Care Up

No one knows just how much the need for child care in Alaska has increased since 1997, when welfare reform set a five-year limit on benefits and required recipients to participate in work activities. Parents going to work face two kinds of child-care needs: finding it and paying for it. We have some—but by no means complete—information about both needs.

• *At the end of 2000, nearly 42 percent of the families receiving state-subsidized child care were (1) families still receiving welfare and either working or preparing to go to work; and (2) families that had recently left welfare* (as the figure on page 16 shows).

• *A lack of child care disrupted work activities for roughly a third of families that left welfare between 1997 and 1999*, according to a survey done for the Alaska Division of Public Assistance.[3]

That division pays for child care for welfare recipients who are either working—but receiving reduced benefits because of their earnings—or participating in other "work activities" required by welfare reform. (Three Alaska Native non-profit organizations now administer welfare programs in their regions; we don't have data on child-care subsidies in those programs.)

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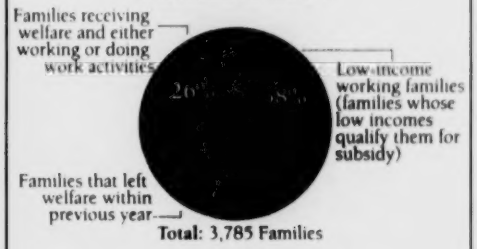
After families leave welfare, they can qualify for the child care subsidy program administered by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. That program pays anywhere from 25 to 97 percent of child care expenses for Alaska families whose incomes fall below 85 percent of the state median family income.

Families within a year of leaving welfare have priority for subsidized child care. Program administrators in Anchorage report that at times since welfare reform began, hundreds of low-income families that were eligible for child care subsidies but were not transitioning from welfare were on waiting lists to get into the program.

But in 2000, the state government transferred funds from the Division of Public Assistance to the child care subsidy program, and in March 2001 there no waiting lists.[4]

Alaska Families Receiving State-Subsidized Child Care,* December 2000


Families receiving welfare and either working or doing work activities
Low-income working families (families whose low incomes qualify them for subsidy)
Families that left welfare within previous year
Total: 3,785 Families

*Includes only those receiving subsidies under state-run programs.
Sources: Alaska Division of Public Assistance and Department of Education and Early Development

MANY ALASKA NATIVE HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS SMOKING, CHEWING TOBACCO

• *Alaska Native high-school students smoke cigarettes and chew tobacco at far higher rates than other students in Alaska and nationwide.*

A 1999 survey of Alaska high-school students (except those in Anchorage) found that half of both Alaska Native boys and girls reported smoking cigarettes. A third of Native high-school boys and nearly one quarter of Native girls also said they used chewing tobacco or snuff.[5]

Those proportions are much higher than among other high-school students in Alaska and nationwide—especially for chewing tobacco. Alaska high-school girls in general are much more likely to chew tobacco or use snuff than are girls nationwide—5 percent as compared with just over 1 percent. But close to 25 percent of Alaska Native high-school girls chew tobacco or use snuff.

SUICIDE ATTEMPTS, ACCIDENTS MUCH MORE COMMON IN RURAL AREAS

• *Children in northwest and interior Alaska are five to ten times more likely than children in Anchorage or Kodiak to be seriously hurt or killed in accidents or suicide attempts.*

From 1994 through 1997, Alaskan children were seriously hurt or killed at rates that varied from more than 21 per 1,000 to about 1 per 1,000 in various regions of the state.[6]

Birth Rate Declines Among Alaska Girls 15 to 19, By Race 1993-1998

Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

BIRTHS TO TEENAGERS DECLINING

• *Some of the best news among Alaska's teenage girls is that they are having fewer babies.*

A declining teen birth rate is a national trend, but Alaska's rate of births among girls 15 to 17 fell nearly 30 percent between 1990 and 1997, as compared with 20 percent nationally. If we look more broadly at girls 15 through 19, the downward birth trend in the 1990s still held among girls of all races in Alaska. Births among Black teenagers were down the most, with that birth rate declining more than 50 percent.[7]

NOTES

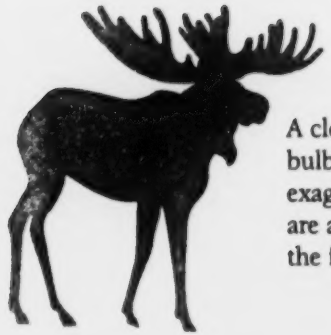
1. See note 8, page 52.
2. See note 7, page 52.
3. See note 9, page 32.
4. Personal communications with program administrators in the Division of Public Assistance and the child care subsidy program.
5. See survey description, page 61.
6. See figure, page 51.
7. See tables, page 32.

Infancy

Prenatal Care in Alaska

Babies With Low Birth Weight

Infant Mortality



A close-up portrait of a moose face would win no beauty contest . . . . The nose is long, bulbous, loose, and overhangs; the eyes are small; the ears long; the shoulder hump is exaggerated, and the legs are inordinately long . . . [but] when all the details of this appearance are assembled, the moose becomes a highly picturesque wilderness animal; and a large bull in the fall, with its spread of palmate antlers, is truly majestic.

Adolf Murie, *A Naturalist in Alaska*
New York: Devin-Adair Company, 1963

DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics uses the Kessner index to classify prenatal care as adequate, intermediate, or inadequate. Both the intermediate and the inadequate categories are considered "less than adequate" care.

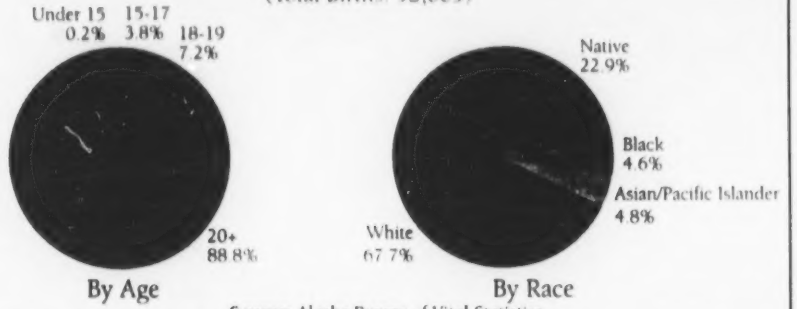
Pregnant women who see doctors or other health professionals at least once during the first trimester of their pregnancies, and at least nine times during their entire pregnancies, receive adequate prenatal care. Those who see doctors at least once during their first or second trimesters, and at least four more times during their pregnancies, receive intermediate care. Those who don't see doctors at all during their first or second trimesters, or fewer than five times throughout their pregnancies, receive inadequate care.

Women who see doctors throughout their pregnancies are more likely to detect any medical problems they or their babies might have and learn how to protect their babies by eating right and not smoking, drinking, or using drugs while they're pregnant. Babies born to mothers who receive little or no prenatal care are more likely to be born with low birth weights or to die during their first year.[1]

More than 52,000 babies were born in Alaska between 1993 and 1997—two-thirds to White mothers, almost one-quarter to Alaska Native mothers, and about five percent each to Black and Asian mothers. Ten percent were born to teenage mothers, mostly 18- and 19-year-olds, but a substantial number were also born to girls ages 15 to 17. The figures on this page and the next show differences in prenatal care among mothers by age, race, and region.

Births in Alaska, 1993-1997, By Age and Race of Mother

(Total Births: 52,005)

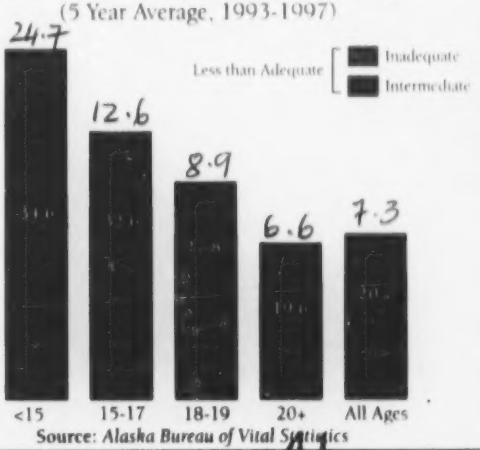


Source: *Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics*

- Almost 28 percent of women who had babies in Alaska from 1993-1997 got less than adequate prenatal care.
- Teenage mothers, especially those under 18, are far less likely than older women to get adequate prenatal care. While about 26 percent of mothers 20 and older failed to get adequate care in the mid-1990s, that figure jumped to 45 percent among those 15-17.

Percentage of Mothers Receiving Less Than Adequate Care, By Age

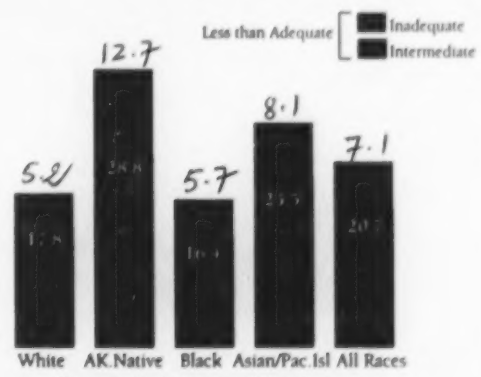
(5 Year Average, 1993-1997)



Source: *Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics*

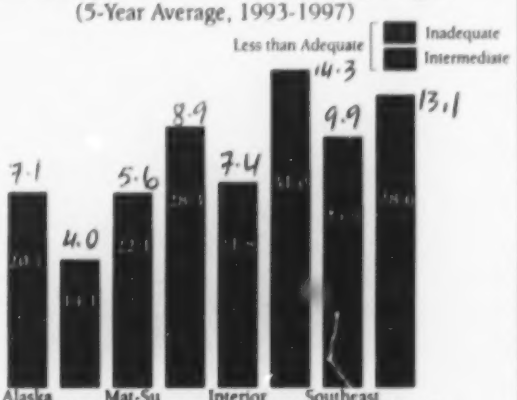
- White and Black women are more likely than Alaska Native and Asian women to get adequate prenatal care. On average from 1993 through 1997, less than one quarter of White and Black mothers but more than 40 percent of Native mothers got less than adequate care.[3]
- Pregnant women in Anchorage are far more likely than women in rural areas to get adequate prenatal care—at least in part because care is much more readily available in Anchorge. About 15 percent of pregnant women in Anchorage got less than adequate prenatal care in the mid-1990s, but that figure exceeded 45 percent in the Northern region and 42 percent in the Southwest.

Percentage of Mothers Receiving Less Than Adequate Prenatal Care, By Race
(5-Year Average, 1993-1997)



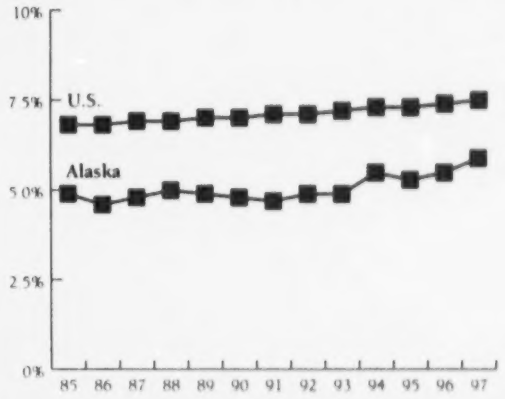
Source: *Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics*

Percentage of Mothers Receiving Less Than Adequate Prenatal Care, By Region
(5-Year Average, 1993-1997)



Source: *Alaska of Bureau Vital Statistics*

Percent of Babies With Low Birth Weight
Trend 1985 - 1997



Source: 2000 *National Kids Count Data Book*

DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

Babies weighing less than 5.5 lbs (or 2,500 grams) at birth are considered to have low birth weight. Regional figures are based on mother's place of residence rather than place of infant's birth.

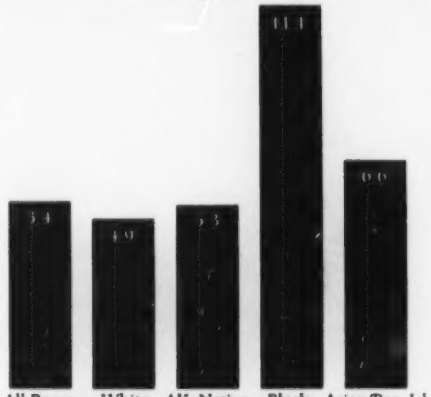
Children who are too small at birth face increased risks of dying during their first year and are more likely to have developmental, behavioral, and physical problems later in life.

Small babies are more commonly born to low-income women who are likely to lack health insurance and thus receive inadequate prenatal care. Women who eat poorly and don't gain enough weight when they're pregnant are also more likely to have small babies. Pregnant women who smoke can double their risk of having small babies.[3] And mothers who are unmarried, have completed less than 12 years of schooling, or are teenagers also have increased risks of delivering small babies.[4]

About 1 in 20 babies born in Alaska from 1993 through 1997 weighed less than 5.5 pounds at birth. For more than a decade, Alaska has had among the lowest rates in the country for this indicator.

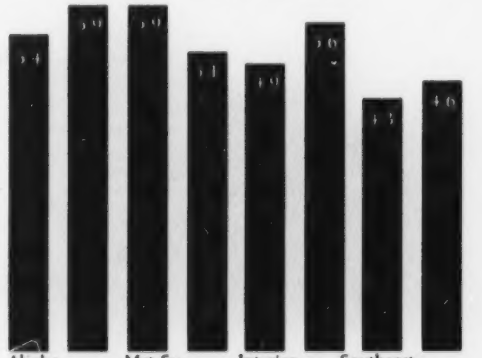
- Alaska ranked fifth in the nation on this indicator in 1997, with about 6 percent of babies weighing less than 5.5 pounds. Nationwide, about 7.5 percent of babies were that small at birth.
- Although Alaska has fewer small babies than the national average, the percentage increased considerably in the 1990s, growing from 4.8 percent in 1990 to 6 percent in 1997.
- Black women in Alaska have small babies at about twice the rate of other racial groups.
- The share of small babies varies modestly by region in Alaska, with the highest rates in Anchorage and the Mat-Su region and the lowest in Southeast and Southwest Alaska.
- Even though they make up only a small percentage of all babies born in Alaska, babies with low birth weights account for 35 percent of total health care costs for infants in the state.[5]

Percent Alaska Babies with Low Birth Weight, By Race
(5-Year Average, 1993-1997)



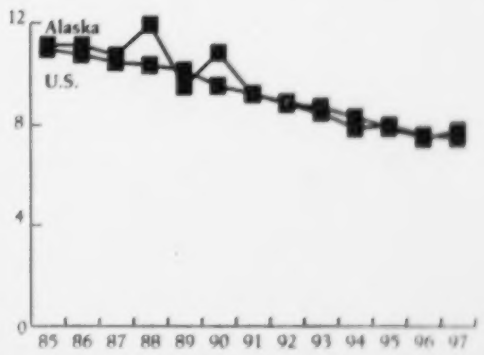
Source: *Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics*

Percent of Alaska Babies with Low Birth Weight, By Region
(5-Year Average, 1993-1997)



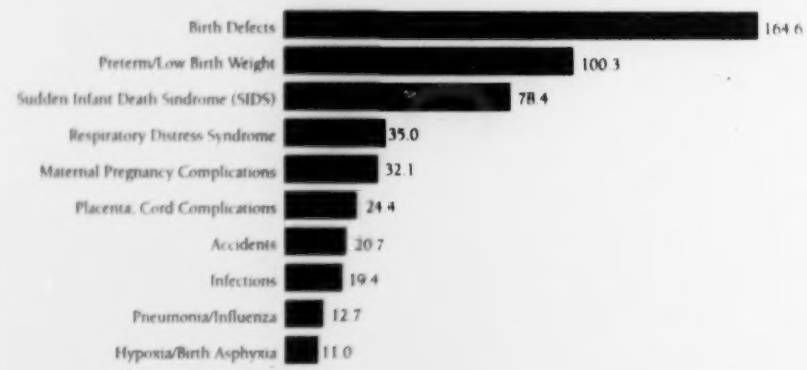
Source: *Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics*

Infant Mortality Rate
Trend 1985 - 1997
(Deaths Before Age 1, Per 1,000 Live Births)



Source: 2000 *National Kids Count* Data Book

Ten Leading Causes of Infant Mortality in U.S., 1996
(Rate per 100,000 Live Births)



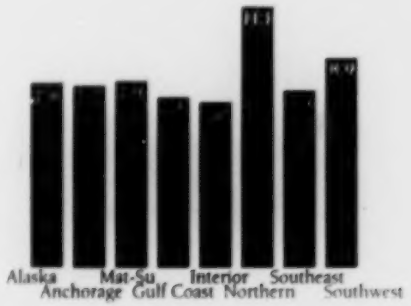
Source: *National Center for Health Statistics*

DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

The infant mortality rate is the number of deaths among infants less than one year old, per 1,000 live births. Infant deaths are reported by place of residence rather than place of death. The infant mortality rate is a common measure of community health. Once babies make it past their first birthdays, they are more likely to live to adulthood.

- About 8 of 1,000 infants born in Alaska from 1993-97 died before age 1.
- Alaska's infant mortality rate in 1997 was close to the U.S. average.
- Rates of infant death in Alaska and in the U.S. have declined sharply in the past 15 years, but are not the lowest among developed nations. Japan, Canada, Britain, and France all have lower rates.[6]
- Infants who are born prematurely, who have low birth weight, or who are born at the same time as one or more siblings have a higher risk of dying in the first year of life.[7]

Infant Mortality Rate By Region
(Per 1,000 Live Births 5-Year Average, 1993-1997)



Source: *Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics*

NOTES FOR INFANCY SECTION

[1] National Center for Health Statistics. *1995 Birth Statistics Released* (1997). Available: www.cdc.gov/nchs/releases/97facts/95natrel.htm

[2] The high rate of inadequate prenatal care among Native women is likely due in part to the limited health care available in villages.

[3] See note 1.

[4] Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics (1999). "Low Birth Weight Babies, 1990-1998," *Alaska Vital Signs*, 7(1).

[5] See note 4.

[6] United States Census Bureau, *International Data Base* (as of 28 December 1998). Available: www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbnew.html

[7] National Center for Health Statistics (1998). *New Study Identifies Infants at Greatest Health Risk*. Available: wwwcdc.gov/nchs/releases/98facts/linkedbd.htm

Economic Well-Being

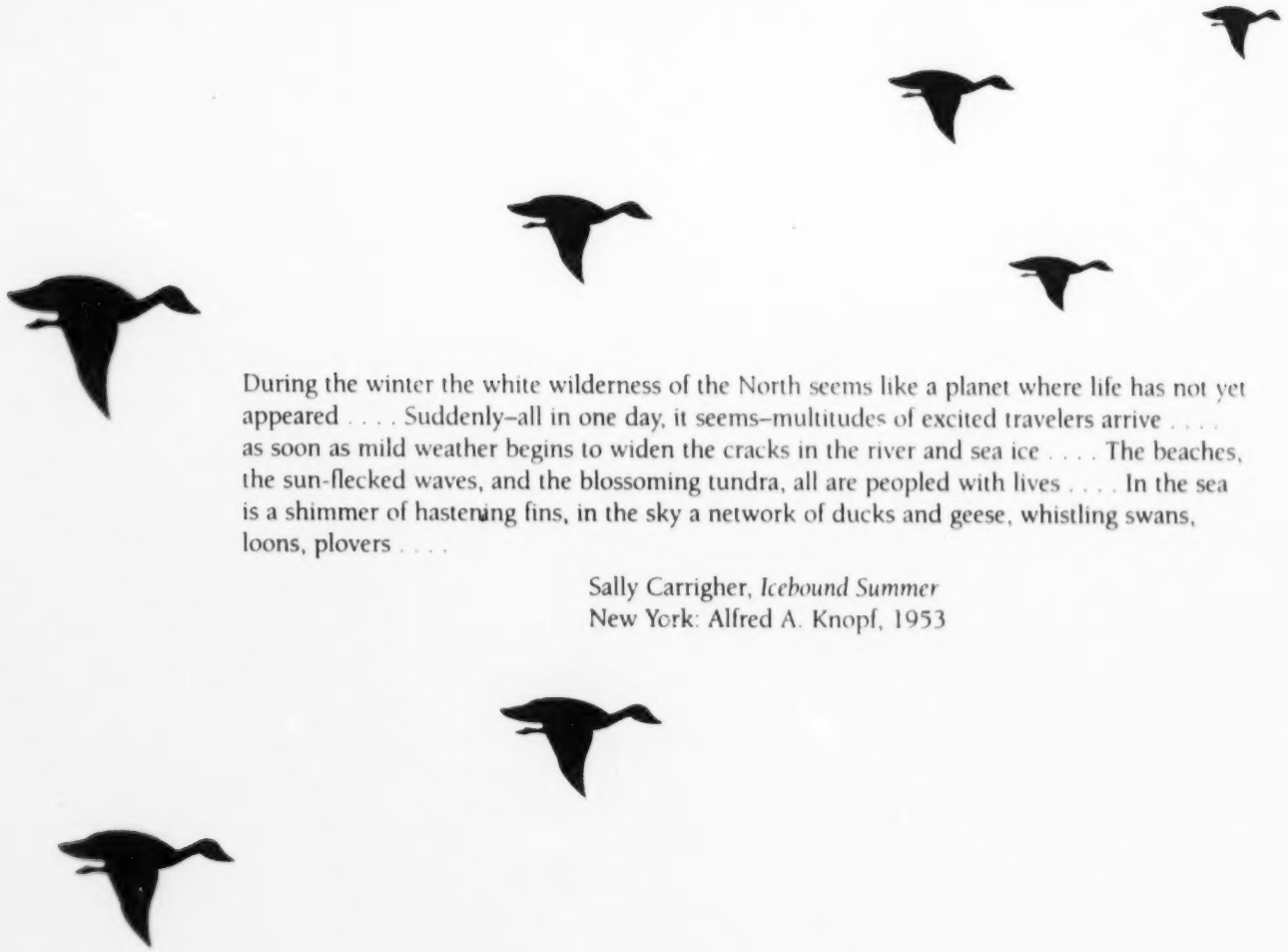
Children Living in Poverty

Children With No Parent Working Full-Time

Child Care in Alaska

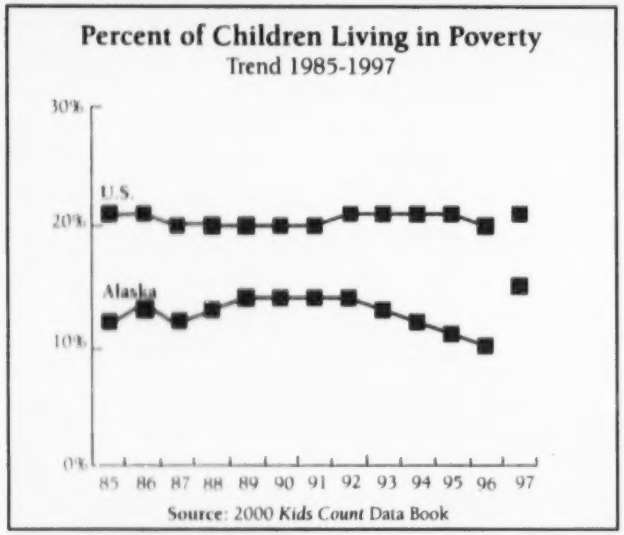
Children In Families Headed By Single Parents

Births To Teens



During the winter the white wilderness of the North seems like a planet where life has not yet appeared . . . . Suddenly–all in one day, it seems–multitudes of excited travelers arrive . . . . as soon as mild weather begins to widen the cracks in the river and sea ice . . . . The beaches, the sun-flecked waves, and the blossoming tundra, all are peopled with lives . . . . In the sea is a shimmer of hastening fins, in the sky a network of ducks and geese, whistling swans, loons, plovers . . . .

Sally Carrigher, *Icebound Summer*
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953



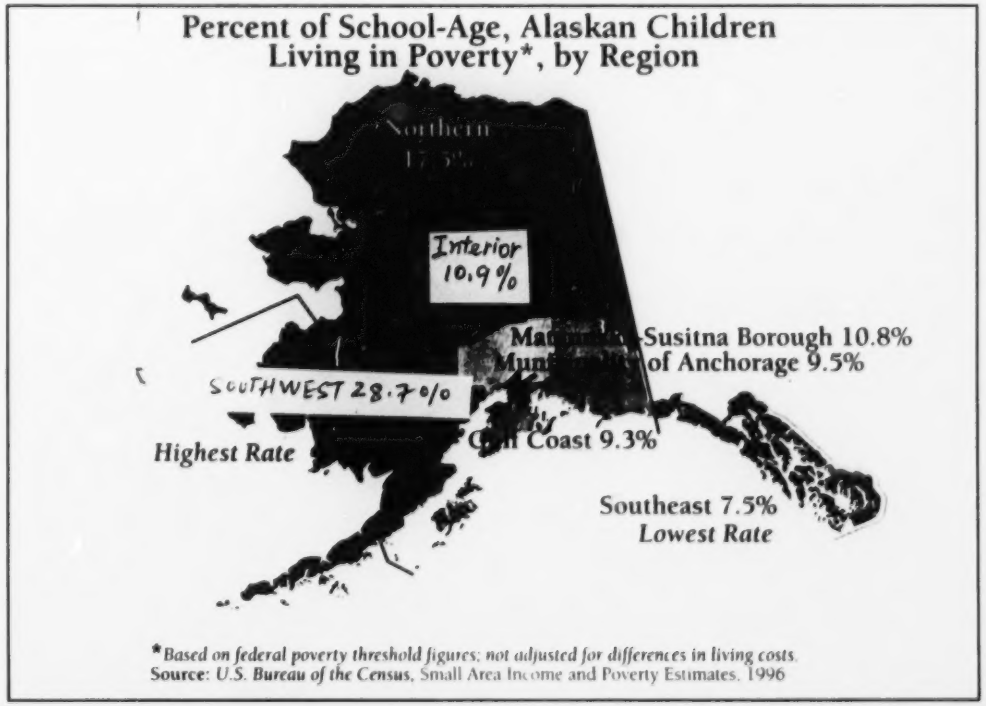
DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

The percentage of children living in poverty is a widely-used measure of children's well-being. The trend data in the graph above show the percentage of children under 18 living in poor families, as measured by the federal Bureau of the Census's poverty threshold. As of 1997, that threshold for a family of four (two adults and two children) was an annual income of $16,276.

The numbers for 1997 are not directly comparable to earlier figures, because in that year the *Kids Count* program began using a different source of data for measuring the share of children living in families below the poverty line.[1]

As of 1997, more than 20 percent of children nationwide lived in poverty—a staggering figure for one of the world's wealthiest nations. Poverty among children in Alaska is lower—15 percent in 1997—as measured by the federal poverty threshold. But remember that the poverty threshold is not adjusted for Alaska's higher costs of living. Many people question whether the current poverty threshold accurately measures poverty nationwide, and the federal census bureau is examining possible changes in the definition of poverty.[2]

The map shows the share of school-age children (ages 5 to 17) living in poverty, by region of Alaska. Nearly a third of children in the Southwest region live below the poverty line. That's more than triple the level in the Southeast region, which has the state's lowest rate of poverty among children, and more than double the rates in most other areas of the state.


Percent of School-Age, Alaskan Children Living in Poverty*, by Region
Northern 17.5%
Interior 10.9%
Susitna Borough 10.8%
of Anchorage 9.5%
SOUTHWEST 28.7%
Highest Rate
Gulf Coast 9.3%
Southeast 7.5%
Lowest Rate
*Based on federal poverty threshold figures; not adjusted for differences in living costs.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 1996

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There are of course other indications of poverty among children—lack of health insurance, for example. The national *Kids Count* program estimates that in 1997 25 percent of children nationwide—and 30 percent of children in Alaska—had no health insurance.

Analysts say one hope for moving children out of poverty is providing them with access to information technology. The adjacent figure shows the shares of children nationwide and in Alaska who had computers and access to the Internet in their homes in 1997.

We don't know what share of children in just low-income households had such access to technology. But Alaskan children in general are much more likely to have computers and Internet connections in their homes than are children nationwide. Nearly 70 percent of Alaska children lived in households with computers in 1997, and more than half had Internet connections. (Computer and Internet access is much more widespread in urban than in rural Alaska households.) Throughout the U.S., just over half of children had computers at home in 1997 and slightly more than one-quarter had Internet connections.

Relying on welfare benefits is another measure of poverty, and recent welfare reforms across the country are intended to help reduce poverty by moving people off welfare and helping them become self-sufficient.

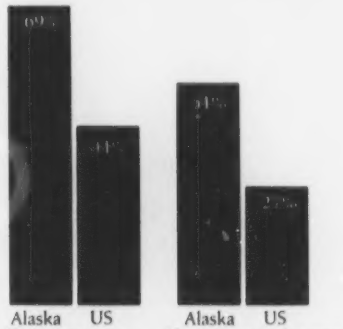
In Alaska, however, residents of roughly two thirds of small Alaska Native communities are exempt from the five-year limit on receiving welfare benefits, because unemployment in those places is so high (over 50 percent) that it is very difficult or impossible to find jobs.

REDUCING POVERTY

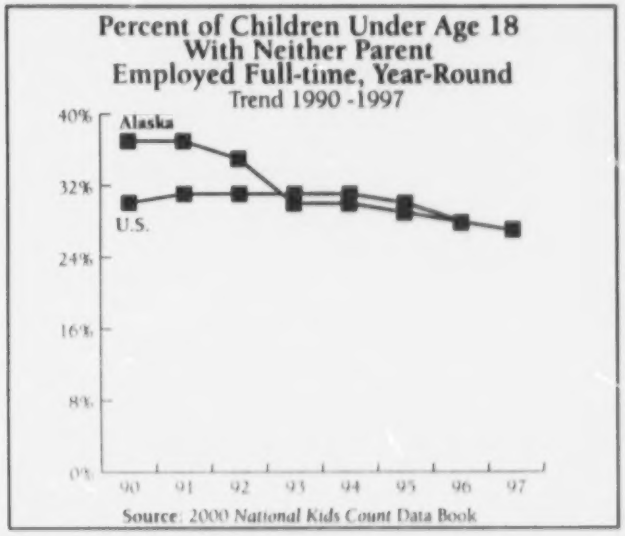
But in places where there are jobs, analysts have recommended some steps to help people move out of poverty.

- Programs intended to reduce poverty and welfare dependence must give people financial incentives to work, by offsetting work-related costs such as transportation and child care, allowing people to work while still receiving some benefits, and eliminating restrictions on hours they can work.[3]
- Employment or job training as a mandatory part of welfare reform programs can substantially increase the incomes of participants.[4]
- Access to stable, high-quality child care that coordinates with parents' work schedules is an important part of moving families out of poverty and off welfare. Entry level jobs typically have nonstandard or rotating schedules, while most child care is available only during standard business hours. Lack of child care at odd hours greatly hinders parents' ability to find and maintain jobs.[5]

Percent of Children Under 18 Living in Households with Computers and Internet Access, 1997



Source: 2000 *National Kids Count* Data Book



DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

This indicator shows the percentage of children under 18 living in households where neither parent has a full-time, year-round job. A new *Kids Count* indicator—calculated back to 1990—this measure is important because it estimates the number of children who lack the stability of having at least one full-time working parent.

In 1997, more than one in four children in Alaska and throughout the U.S. lived in households where neither parent was employed at a full-time, year-round job.

Alaska has seen significant improvement in this indicator in recent years. The share of children without at least one parent working full time dropped from 37 percent in 1990 to 27 percent in 1997.

LIMITATIONS OF INDICATOR IN ALASKA

Although this indicator provides a good measure of the economic well-being and stability of families, it has some shortcomings in rural Alaska.

Full-time, year-round work is scarce in many of Alaska's small rural places, especially remote Alaska Native villages. Seasonal jobs like commercial fishing or construction are often the main source of income for rural families.

Many rural families that depend on seasonal incomes also get a big share of their food through hunting and fishing. For instance, in the early 1990s, a third of rural households in southeast Alaska reported getting at least half their meat and fish by hunting and fishing.[6]

For some rural families, the combination of adequate earnings from seasonal work, and the fish and game from hunting and fishing, may provide an equivalent income to that provided by having a full-time working parent. But that way of life is not accounted for in this indicator.

BACKGROUND: WELFARE REFORM[7]

Thousands of families in Alaska have been affected by welfare reforms that began in July 1997, as part of sweeping changes at the federal level. Congress intended the reforms to reduce welfare caseloads nationwide and move families toward self-sufficiency.

Welfare benefits are now limited to five years. That change is reflected in the program name: what used to be called "Aid to Families with Dependent Children" is now known as "Temporary Assistance to Needy Families."

Also, welfare recipients are now required to participate in "work activities." Those activities can include looking for work, getting vocational education, doing community work—or working at paid jobs. As of early 2001, about 40 percent of the families receiving benefits under the state-administered program in Alaska had some earnings—but because their earnings were small, they could still qualify for reduced benefits.

The same reforms that set time limits on welfare benefits also provided subsidies for child care, transportation, and other costs families face as they try to become self-sufficient. And Congress included special reform provisions for Alaska Natives:

- Welfare recipients in federally-recognized Alaska Native villages are exempt from the five-year benefit limit, if 50 percent or more of the adults in the village are unemployed. As of early 2001, about two out of three Alaska Native villages qualified for that exemption.
- The non-profit arms of the 13 Alaska Native regional corporations (formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act) are authorized to take over administration of welfare programs in their regions, if they develop plans and apply to the state. As of early 2001, three Native non-profits were administering welfare programs in their regions.

An obvious effect of welfare reform is that more families now need child care—both those still getting benefits but trying to become self-sufficient, and those just off welfare and trying to stay on their feet.

DEMAND FOR CHILD CARE[8]

Complete information on how the demand for child care in Alaska has increased in the wake of welfare reform is impossible to get. But figures from state-subsidized child care programs provide some indications of change.

ALASKA FAMILIES RECEIVING SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE UNDER STATE-RUN PROGRAMS, DECEMBER 2000

	Number	Percent of Total
State-Administered Temporary Assistance[1]		
Families receiving welfare benefits *and* working or participating in work activities[2]	2,882	100%
Families receiving child care	**972**	**34%**
Child Care Subsidy Program[3]	**Number**	**Percent of Program**
Low-income families receiving child-care subsidies	2,813	100%
Families that left welfare within past year[4]	**605**	**22%**
Other low-income families[5]	2,208	78%

[1]Figures do not include assistance programs administered by Alaska Native non-profit organizations.

[2]The total state-administered welfare caseload (excluding cases administered by Native non-profit organizations) in December 2000 was 5,586. Of those cases, 1,061 cases were children receiving benefits but living with adults not receiving benefits. Another 318 were families that were exempt from work requirements because they had children under age 1. The remaining 1,325 were families who were either temporarily unable to participate in work activities or who were working with case managers to be assigned activities.

[3]This is a program of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. It pays anywhere from 25 to 97 percent of child-care expenses for families whose income is 85 percent or less of the state median family income.

[4]Families within the first year of transitioning from welfare to work have priority in this program.

[5]These families may or may not have ever received welfare benefits. If the program does not have enough funds to subsidize child care for all qualifed families, these families get lower priority than those who have just moved off welfare.

Sources: Alaska Division of Public Assistance; Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

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Families Receiving Welfare

The Alaska Division of Public Assistance administers the Alaska Temporary Assistance Program, which provides welfare benefits to recipients statewide, except in the three regions where Alaska Native non-profit organizations have taken over administration.

Part of that temporary assistance program is subsidized child care for welfare recipients who either have jobs or are participating in work activities.

Families Transitioning from Welfare

A second state program is the Child Care Subsidy Program, administered by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. That program subsidizes a portion of the child care costs for working families whose income is 85 percent or less of the state median income.

Within that program, families who have left welfare within the previous year get priority, if there is not enough funding for all qualified families. Program administrators in Anchorage report that at times since welfare reform began, hundreds of working families who were not transitioning from welfare were on waiting lists because there wasn't enough program funding.

But in 2000, to help deal with the effects of welfare reform, the state government transferred funds from the Division of Public Assistance to the child care subsidy program and the Department of Education and Early Development. As of early 2001, there were no waiting lists for child care subsidies.

The table to the left shows that of the 2,882 families receiving welfare benefits under the state-run program—and either working or doing work activities in December 2000—about 970, or 34 percent, were also receiving subsidies for child care costs.

In the state subsidy program for working families, about 2,800 families were receiving subsidized child care as of December 2000, and about 600 of those—22 percent—were families that had left welfare within the previous year.

Altogether, about 1,580 families either still on welfare or transitioning from welfare were receiving child care subsidies under state-administered programs at the end of 2000. That represented about 40 percent of the families receiving state-subsidized child care.

These numbers don't tell us everything about how the demand for child care in Alaska has changed since 1997. But they make it clear that many more families have required child care—and those numbers are likely to continue rising in the next few years, as more families transition from welfare.

FINDING CHILD CARE

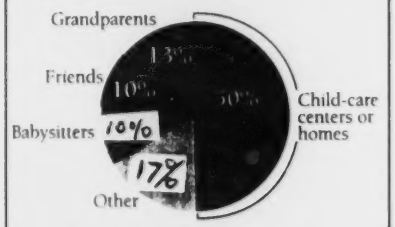
Parents going to work—or preparing to go to work—face not only the problem of paying for child care but also finding acceptable child care.

Again, we don't have complete information about the difficulties families transitioning from welfare have had in finding child care. But in a recent survey of Alaska families that had left welfare rolls since 1997, about a third of respondents reported that their work activities had been disrupted at some time by difficulties finding child care.[9]

The pie chart shows the kinds of child care former welfare recipients reported using in 2000. About half relied on child-care centers or homes, with the other half relying on grandparents, friends, babysitters, after-school programs, and other kinds of child care.

In 2001, the state government plans to implement a coordinated professional development system for child-care providers—to help insure that those who care for Alaska's children are aware of and have access to training and development opportunities. State officials hope this system in turn will help give Alaska's parents improved access to the child care they need.

What Kinds of Child Care Were Former Alaska Welfare Recipients Using in 2000?



Source: Institute for Circumpolar Health Studies, University of Alaska Anchorage

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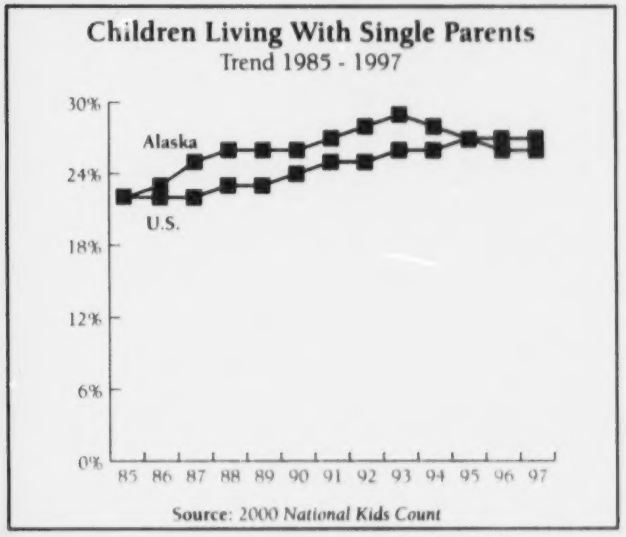
CHILDREN LIVING WITH SINGLE PARENTS



DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

This indicator measures the percentage of families headed by single parents (either mothers or fathers), with children under 18. The children may be related to the parent by birth, adoption, or marriage.

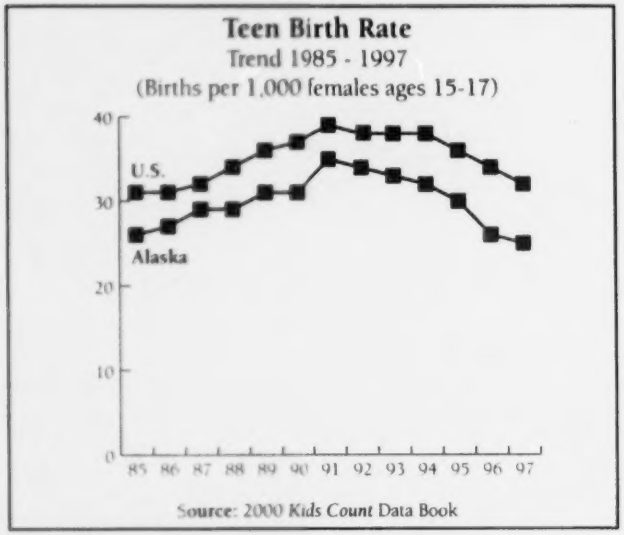
Children who grow up with just one parent often lack the economic and social support that two-parent households can more readily provide. Clearly households with two parents have the potential to earn more. And when single parents work—as more are doing under recent national welfare reforms—they have no one to share the difficulties of coordinating child care with work schedules; of arranging transportation to and from school, day care, and work; and of carrying out the dozens of other daily responsibilities of raising children.

Most single parents are women, and many single mothers are also teenagers who live below the poverty line and get little or no support from the fathers of their children.

And by the time teenagers turn 16, those being raised by single parents are twice as likely to be sexually active as teens who are raised in two-parent families.[10]

About one-quarter of children in Alaska were being raised in single-parent households in 1997. That proportion is slightly below the national average, so Alaska ranks 18th in the U.S. on this indicator.

And although the share of families headed by single parents increased from 24 to 27 percent nationwide from 1990 to 1997, that share in Alaska has declined somewhat since 1993.



DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

The trend data in the graph above, from the national *Kids Count Data Book*, report the number of girls between just the ages of 15 and 17 who have had babies. The regional breakdowns within Alaska include girls ages 15 through 19.

Most teenage mothers are unmarried and have not completed high school. They are unlikely to receive either financial or social support from the fathers of their children, who are usually teenagers themselves.

Nationally, 32 of every 1,000 girls 15-17 had babies in 1997. In Alaska the rate was significantly lower, at 25 per 1,000.

The good news is that both the national and the Alaska rates of birth among teenagers 15-17 dropped sharply in the 1990s. The national dropped nearly 20 percent and the Alaska rate close to 30 percent.

If we look at a broader base of teenage girls in Alaska—all those from 15 through 19—an average of about 56 per 1,000 had babies annually from 1993 through 1997.

The rate was much higher in the Northern region of the state during that period, with nearly 1 in 10 teenage girls having babies. The lowest rates were in the Mat-Su, Southeast, and Gulf Coast regions, where about 5 of 100 teenage girls had babies.

The tables on page 31 show trends in births among teenage mothers in Alaska, by race and other characteristics, from 1993 through 1998.

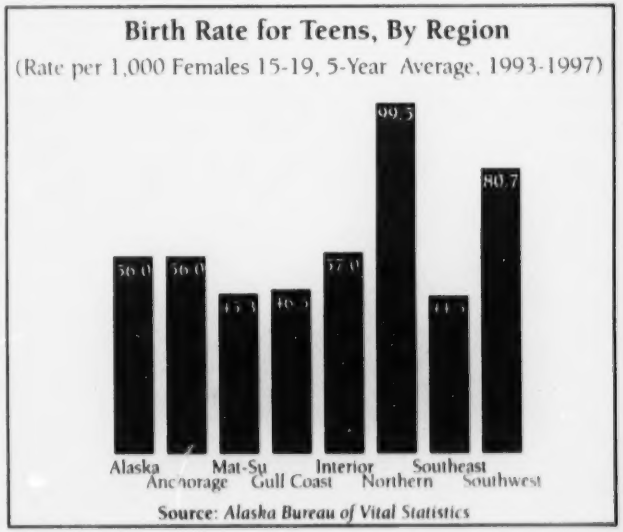
The birth rate among Alaska's teenage girls 15-19 dropped nearly one-quarter during that period. The trend was down among girls of all races except Asian girls, whose rate increased nearly one quarter. The biggest drop was among Black teenagers, who cut their rate by more than half in five years.

In 1998, birth rates were highest among Alaska Native girls and lowest among White girls, with rates among Black and Asian girls in between. Remember, however, that there are fewer Black and Asian girls in Alaska, so a relatively small change in the number of births can affect birth rates.

Most teenage mothers in Alaska are unmarried, and that share increased somewhat in recent years, growing from about 70 to 76 percent between 1993 and 1998. Teenage mothers as a share of all mothers, and the share of teenagers who've had more than one baby, changed little.

We know that teenage mothers and their babies face many hardships, including:

- Babies born to single teens who drop out of high school are 10 times more likely to live in poverty than children born to older mothers who have completed school and who have husbands.[11]
- Children born to teenagers are about three times more likely to go to jail during adolescence and early adulthood.[12]
- Children of teenage mothers are less likely to finish high school and more likely to become teenage parents themselves.[13]
- Society spent (in public money) an estimated $15 billion annually for teenage parents and their children in the mid-1990s.[14]



BIRTHS PER 1,000 ALASKA TEENS (15-19), BY RACE*

	Total Number of Girls 15-19	Birth Rate			Percent Change	
	1998	1993	1997	1998	93-98	97-98
White	15,923	48.0	38.5	37.0	-22.9%	-3.9%
Alaska Native	4,824	104.3	83.7	86.0	-17.5	2.7
Black	1,051	112.3	68.8	50.4	-55.1	-26.7
Asian andPac/Isl.	968	51.8	63.7	47.5	-8.3	-25.4
Total	22,766	62.2	50.3	48.4	-22.2	-3.8

* Teens of Hispanic origin can be of any race.

Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics *Annual Report*, 1993, 1997, and 1998.

TRENDS IN BIRTHS TO ALASKA TEENS

	1993	1997	1998	Percent Change 93-98	97-98
Birth rate for younger teens (per 1,000 females ages 15-17)	34.2	26.2	26.4	-22.8%	0.8%
Percent of teen births to unmarried teens	69.6%	76.6%	76.1%	10.1	-0.7
Percent of teen births that are repeat births	n/a	19.5%	19.8%	n/a	1.5
Teen births as a percent of all births	10.8%	11.2%	11.2%	3.7	0.0

Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics *Annual Report*, 1993, 1997, and 1998.

NOTES FOR ECONOMIC WELL-BEING SECTION

[1] See *Kids Count Data Book 2000*, pages 178-179, for a discussion of this change.

[2] The U.S. census bureau reported in late 2000 that it was studying possible alternatives for measuring poverty, and it published the results of some experimental poverty measures. See the bureau's Web site at: http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/povmeas.html

[3] V. Knox, C. Miller, and L.A. Coennetian (2000). *Reforming Welfare & Rewarding Work: A Summary of the Final Report on the Minnesota Family Investment Program*. Available at: www.mdrc.org/Reports2000/MFIPSummary.html

[4] T. Brock, F. Doolittle, V. Fellerath, and M. Wiseman. (1997). *Creating New Hope: Implementation of a Program to Reduce Poverty and Reform Welfare* (Executive Summary). See: www.lafollette.wisc.edu/newhope/summary.html

[5] See note 4 above, and also National Academy of Sciences. (1999). *New Findings on Children, Families and Economic Self-Sufficiency: Summary of a Research Briefing*. Available at: www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/findings/intro

[6] Marybeth Holleman and Jack Kruse. (1991). "Hunting and Fishing in Southeast Alaska," in *Alaska Review of Social and Economic Conditions*, Volume XXVIII, No. 1. Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage.

[7] Information on welfare reform and subsidized child care in Alaska provided by Alaska Division of Public Assistance and Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. More information on the status of reform in Alaska as of 2000 is available at: www.hss.state.ak.us.

[8] See note 7.

[9] *Reaching for Independence: A Study of Families That Have Left the Alaska Temporary Assistance Program*. Pre-Publication Executive Summary. Institute for Circumpolar Health Studies, University of Alaska Anchorage. January 2001.

[10] K.A. Moore, A.K. Driscoll, and L. Duberstein Linderberg. (1998). *A Statistical Portrait of Adolescent Sex, Contraception, and Childbearing*. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, Washington, D.C.

[11] Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Kids Count Data Book* 2000. Baltimore, Maryland, 2000.

[12] R.A. Maynard.(1996). *Kids Having Kids: Economic Costs and Social Consequences of Teen Pregnancy*. Urban Institute Press: Washington, D.C.

[13] See note 12.

[14] See note 12.

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Education

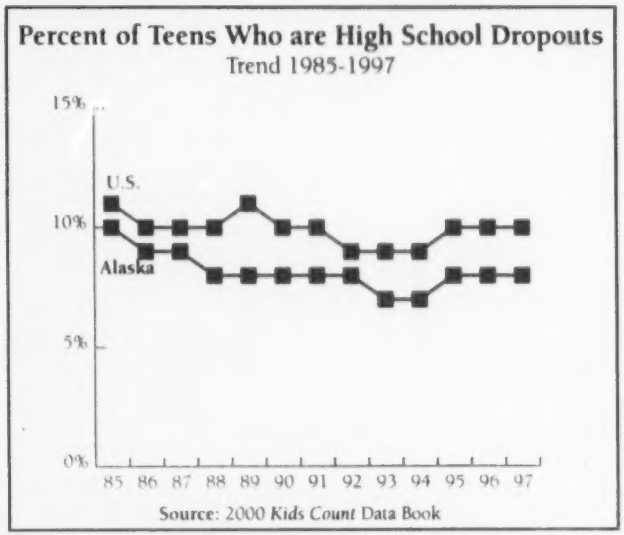
Teens Who Drop Out

Teens Not In School and Not Working

School Achievement

I heard a familiar cry—it was the sky music of sandhill cranes in migration . . . . westward as far as the eye would take me . . . . I guessed the flocks at five or six thousand . . . . Words are inadequate to describe the flight . . . the alternate beating of wings and sailing, the beauty of the flocks in silhouettes against the white mountains and the blue sky and the exhilarating poetry of it all in this primeval wilderness country.

Adolf Murie, *A Naturalist in Alaska*
New York: Devon-Adair Company, 1963



DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

The trend graph above is based on the national *Kids Count* definition of dropouts: the percentage of teenagers 16 through 19 who are not in school and who have not graduated from high school.

The dropout rates by race and region within Alaska are based on different definitions, depending on what information is available. The table showing dropout rates by race includes teenagers in grades 7 through 12, roughly ages 13 through 19.

The map showing dropout rates by region (page 36) includes teenagers in grades 9 through 12; some of these dropouts are younger than 16. The dropout rates in most regions are lower than the statewide figure in the trend graph, because the regional rates include students under 16, who are less likely to drop out of school.

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development classifies students as dropouts if they (1) left school without graduating or completing an approved program; (2) moved out of the school district or state and are not known to be enrolled elsewhere; (3) enrolled in adult education programs or schools not approved by the district; or (4) were suspended or expelled from school and failed to return.

Dropouts often spend their lives in poverty, because their lack of education makes it difficult for them to get higher paying jobs.

Since 1985, the share of Alaska teenagers 16 through 19 who are not in high school and who have not graduated has declined somewhat, and it has consistently been smaller than the national average. In 1997, 8 percent of Alaska's 16-to-19 year olds dropped out of school, compared with 10 percent nationwide.

Alaska Native students (in grades 7 through 12) are the most likely to drop out of school in Alaska. They accounted for less than one quarter of all students but more than a third of dropouts during the 1998-99 school year. Black and Hispanic students also drop out of school at somewhat higher percentages than their shares of the total student population.

About 2,000 high-school students (grades 9 through 12) dropped out of Alaska schools during the 1998-99 year. That's 5.3 percent of the 38,400 high-school students that year.

Overall, the dropout rate was highest (roughly 9 percent) in the Interior and Southwest regions of the state and lowest in Anchorage (2.5 percent). The dropout rate in other regions varied from about 4.5 to around 6 percent.

ALASKA DROPOUTS (GRADES 7-12) BY RACE, 1998-1999

Ethnicity	Percent of Total Enrollment	Percent of Total Dropouts
White	65.3%	51.3%
Alaska Native*	22.3	34.5
Asian/Pac. Isl.	5.1	3.6
Black	4.2	5.5
Hispanic	2.8	3.9
Other	0.4	1.2

* Includes other Native Americans

Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, *Report Card to the Public*, School Year 1998-99

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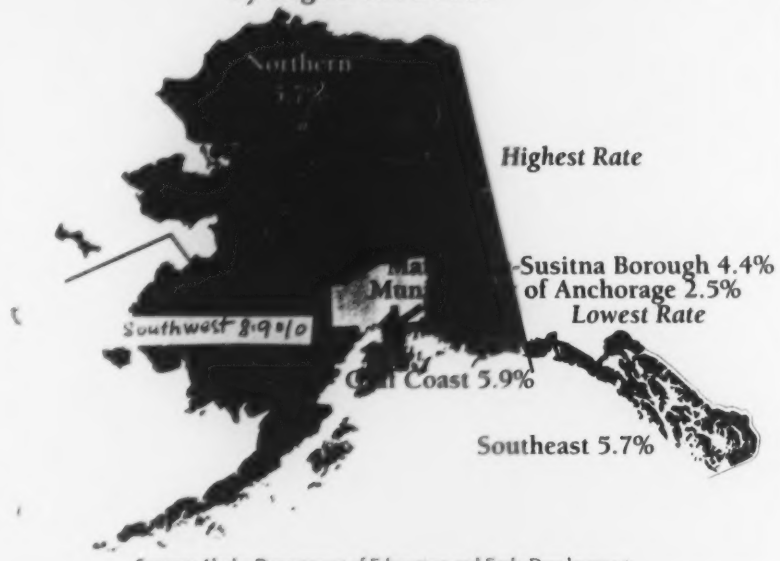
PREVENTING DROPOUTS

Why do kids drop out, and how can we help keep them in school?

- Holding children back a grade increases the chances that they will drop out. The American Federation of Teachers reports that holding children back makes them feel alienated from school but does not increase their academic skills.[1]
- Teenagers who suffer continuous, severe bullying are more likely to have poor grades and to drop out of school.[2]
- Parents' attitudes toward education influence the dropout rate: Children with parents who expect them to graduate are significantly more likely to graduate.[3]
- Students who take part in extracurricular activities during their middle school or early high school years are more likely to stay in school and earn diplomas, according to a recent study.[4]
- Preventing or reducing the use of tobacco and marijuana among younger students could make them less likely to drop out when they reach high school, recent research suggests.[5]

Percentage of Students Dropping Out of High School, By Region 1998-1999



Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

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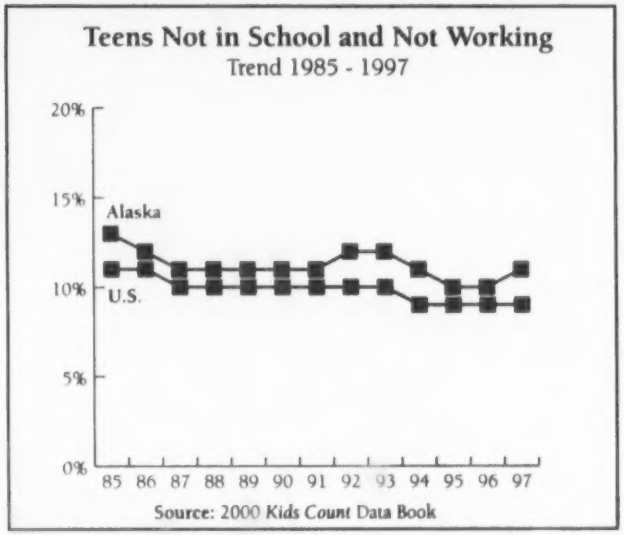

DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

This indicator measures the percentage of teenagers, ages 16 through 19, who are not in school, not working, and not in the military. It includes both high-school dropouts and those who have either high-school or General Education Development (GED) diplomas but are not working.

This is a measure of teenagers who are not doing anything productive during a critical period of development. Idle teenagers are establishing histories of unemployment and disengagement that may plague them as they get older.

About 11 percent of Alaska's teenagers 16 to 19 weren't in school or working in 1997—meaning that one in ten wasn't getting either education or work experience as they moved toward adulthood. Alaska's rate was above the 1997 national average of 9 percent, but it has fallen since 1985, when it was 13 percent.

Can we predict which children are at risk of being out of the work force and out of school when they reach their late teens?

- Children who don't read well, who aren't attached to school, and who are antisocial are more likely to be unemployed as teenagers and young adults.[6]
- Teenage boys who used alcohol, marijuana, or cocaine at early ages are more likely to be repeatedly fired or to quit their jobs.[7]
- Children who at age nine have problems in their relationships with other children tend to have difficulties throughout their schooling. Those difficulties can reduce their educational opportunities and lead to later unemployment.[8]

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SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

Scores on standardized tests compare school achievement of Alaskan students and of students nationwide. Students in Alaska take the California Achievement Test, 5th edition (CAT-5) in the 4th, 8th, and 11th grades. This widely-used test assesses reading, mathematics, and language arts skills.

Among all school-age children, 25 percent normally score in each of four quartiles. So a state using the CAT-5 can compare the distribution of scores among its students to the normal distribution into equal quartiles.

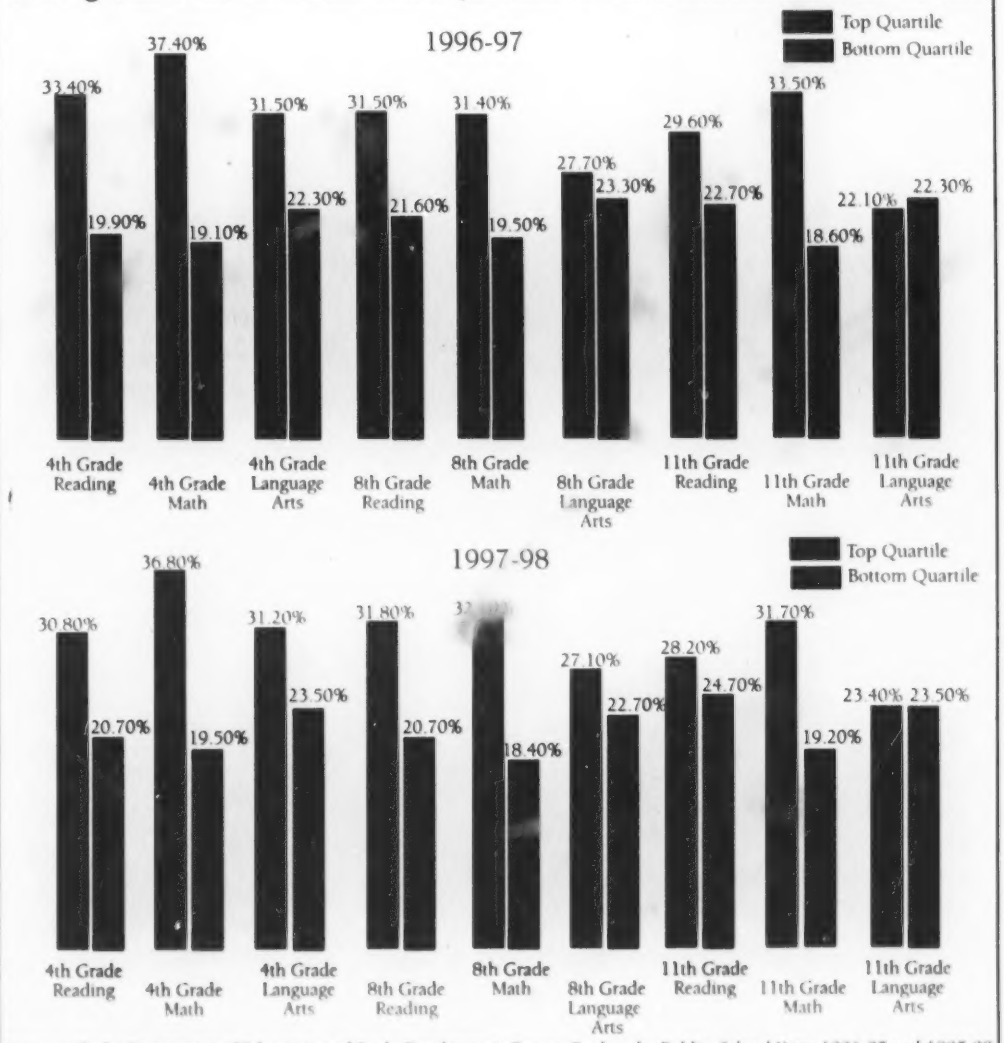
If less than 25 percent of students in a given state score in the lowest quartile, and more than 25 percent score in the highest quartile, state officials can be reasonably confident that their students are receiving at least adequate instruction in the areas tested.

Alaska's 4th, 8th, and 11th graders scored above average in nearly all areas tested in both the 1996-97 and 1997-98 school years (as the adjacent figure shows). The exception was 11th grade language arts, where fewer students than average scored in the top quartile.

Alaska's scores were consistently highest in mathematics at all grade levels, with 31 to 37 percent of students scoring in the top quartile and only 18 to 19 percent in the bottom quartile. Reading scores of Alaskan students were also above the national average, with 28 to 33 percent scoring in the highest quartile and 20 to 25 percent in the lowest quartile.

Scores on the language arts section of the test were above average among Alaskan 4th graders, but dropped to slightly below the norm among 11th graders.

Percentage of Alaska Students in 4th, 8th and 11th Grades Scoring within the First and Fourth Quartiles on the California Achivement Test



Source: *Alaska Department of Education and Early Development*, Report Card to the Public, School Years 1996-97 and 1997-98

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IMPROVING SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

Various factors can affect how well children do in school. One of the most interesting such factors was cited in 1995 by the New Jersey School Board Association, which reported in its newsletter that:

> The closest correlation to high scores on college entrance exams is not per-pupil expenditure for instruction, teachers' salaries, or textbooks. Instead, by a wide margin, it is the local tax dollars spent per pupil on library media centers.[9]

Other influential factors include having a strong start in school:

- Children who attend full-day kindergarten tend to have higher achievement scores throughout the elementary grades. These children are also less likely to repeat grades and tend to have better overall grades. Research has shown that attending kindergarten all day especially benefits children whose parents have low incomes or little education.[10]
- Children who have strong, enriching educational environments before they start elementary school have higher achievement scores in elementary school.[11]

NOTES FOR EDUCATION SECTION

[1] *Passing on Failure*: The American Federation of Teachers Report, Fall 1997. Cited in *Action for Better Schools*, Newsletter of the National Coalition of Education Activistists. Vol. 5, No.4, Spring/Summer 1998.

[2] *Youth Clips*. The Alaska Youth Data Project. Vol 1, Issue 3.

[3] K. L. Alexander, D. R. Entwisle, and C. S. Horsey (1997). "From first grade forward: Early foundations of high-school dropouts." *Sociology of Education*, 70(2),87-107.

[4] J. L. Mahoney and R. B. Cairns (1997). "Do extracurricular activities protect against early school dropout?" *Developmental Psychology*, 33(2), 241-253.

[5] P. Ellickson, K. Bui, R. Bell, and K. A. McGuigan (1998). "Does early drug use increase the risk of dropping out of high school?" *Journal of Drug Issues*, 28(2), 357-381.

[6] A. Caspi, B. R. Wright, T. E. Entner-Moffitt and P. A. Silva (1998). "Early failure in the labor market: Childhood and adolescent predictors of unemployment in the transition to adult." *American Sociological Review*, 63(3), 424-451.

[7] J. C. Mijares (1997). "Early drug use and quits and discharges among adolescent males." *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 26(4), 439-458.

[8] L. J. Woodward and D. M. Fergusson (2000). "Childhood peer relationship problems and later risks of educational underachievement and unemployment." *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, 41(2), 191-201.

[9] New Jersey School Board Association *Newsletter*, quoting William Bainbridge, SchoolMatch President, March 21, 1995. Cited in *Libraries and Reading: Indispensable Partners*. Middle Grades Reading Network, Evansville, Indiana.

[10] Pennsylvania Partnership for Children (1999). *Learning to learn: Full-day kindergaren for at-risk kids*.

[11] L. [illegible] Schweinhart and D.P. Weikart (1999). "The advantages of High/Scope: Helping children lead successful lives." *Educational Leadership*, 57(1), 76-77.

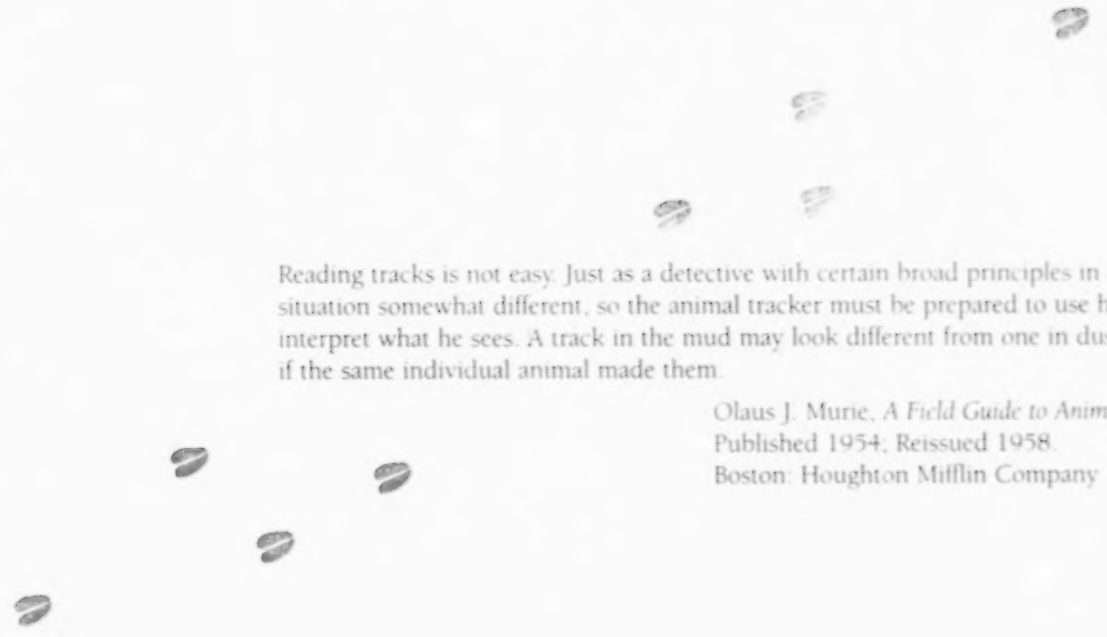
Children in Danger

Child Death Rate

Teen Violent Death

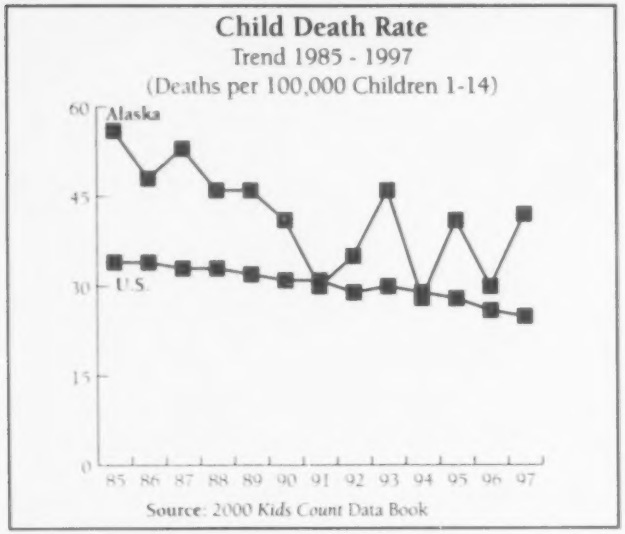
Child Abuse and Neglect

Child Injuries



Reading tracks is not easy. Just as a detective with certain broad principles in mind finds each situation somewhat different, so the animal tracker must be prepared to use his ingenuity to interpret what he sees. A track in the mud may look different from one in dust, or in snow, even if the same individual animal made them.

Olaus J. Murie, *A Field Guide to Animal Tracks*
Published 1954; Reissued 1958.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company



DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

The child death rate is the number of deaths per 100,000 children, ages 1-14, from both illness and injury. Regional statistics are based on the child's place of residence, not place of death.

Injuries kill most of the children who die in Alaska and nationwide—including injuries from vehicle and airplane crashes, drownings, fires, poisonings, and gunshot wounds. Many children could be saved if parents and other adults used infant car seats, maintained smoke detectors in homes, and kept firearms and poisons away from children.

Alaska had the highest child death rate in the U.S. in 1997: 42 per 100,000 children ages 1-14, as compared with a national average of 25 per 100,000. The rate in the U.S. declined steadily in recent years, but Alaska's rate fluctuates sharply from year to year, partly because the number of Alaskan children who die is—fortunately—small. So a small change in the number of deaths can make a significant difference in the rate of death in a given year. Looking at an average rate over several years helps smooth out year-to-year fluctuations.

From 1993 through 1997, the death rate among Alaskan children was 37 deaths per 100,000 children—lower than in just 1997, but still far above the national average.

The death rate among Alaskan children varied sharply by region in recent years, from a high of 96 per 100,000 in the Northern region to a low of 25 per 100,000 in Anchorage.

Natural causes killed about a third of the children who died in Alaska in 1998, but injuries killed the rest. The leading cause of injury death was vehicle accidents.

How Did Alaska Children (1-17) Die in 1998?

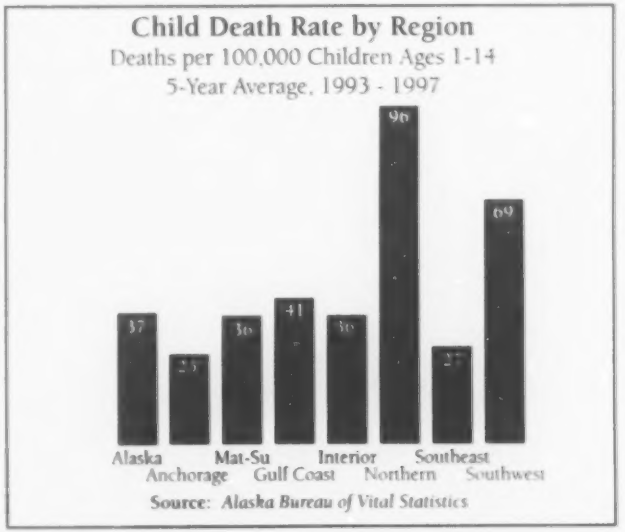
Causes of Death (In Percentages)

Manner of Death
(Numbers of Deaths by Age)

	1-4	5-9	10-17	Total
Natural Causes	7	5	8	20
Accidents	5	7	19	31
Suicides	0	0	9	9
Homicides	2	1	2	5
Other	1	0	0	1
Total	15	13	38	66

Total Deaths in 1998: 66

Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, 1998 *Annual Report*



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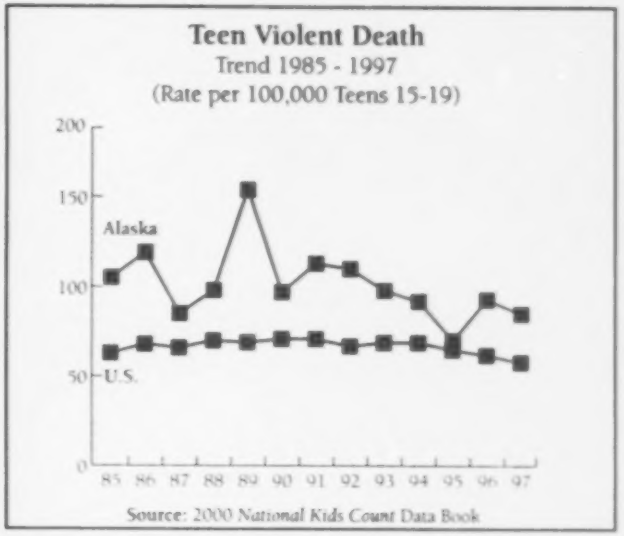
TEEN VIOLENT DEATH



DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

This indicator measures the rate of violent death (from accidents, homicides, and suicides) per 100,000 teenagers ages 15 to 19. The national *Kids Count Data Book* for 2000 reports that nearly 90 percent of deaths among teenagers nationwide in 1997 resulted from accidents, homicides or suicides.[1]

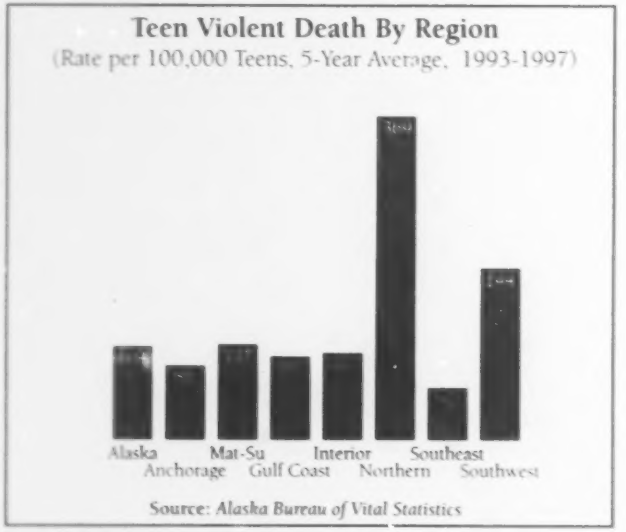
The rate of teen violent death in Alaska has been consistently higher than the national rate for more than a decade. In 1997, Alaska's rate was 85 deaths per 100,000 teenagers, compared with a national rate of 58. Only two states (Arkansas and Mississipi) had higher rates in 1997.

But remember that Alaska's rate is based on a relatively small number of deaths (44 in 1997), so a modest change in the number of deaths in a given year can make a significant change in the death rate.

Still, even if we look at an annual average over a longer period—1993 through 1997—we see that Alaska's rate is consistently high. During that five-year period, the violent death rate among Alaska's teenagers averaged 104 per 100,000. (We use the most current Alaska population numbers to calculate our five-year averages; the resulting rates are somewhat different from the national *Kids Count* calculations for Alaska.)

The violent death rate among Alaska's teenagers varies sharply by region. On average from 1993 through 1997, the highest rate (369 per 100,000 in the Northern region) was nearly 6.5 times greater than the lowest rate (57 per 100,000 in the Southeast).

Again, remember that numbers of actual deaths in regions of Alaska are very small. Using an average over a period of years rather than a single year shows a more reliable picture of death rates in areas with small populations—but even so, the rates are based on a relatively small number of deaths.



DEFINITION

Child abuse or neglect exists when parents or other adult guardians hurt or endanger children in their care—physically or mentally—or fail to protect them from such harm.

Alaska Investigation Procedures and Interpretation of Statistics

The Division of Family and Youth Services (DFYS) in the Alaska Department of Health and Human Services investigates reports of suspected child abuse and neglect in Alaska. Anyone who believes a child is in danger can file a report with DFYS, which screens the reports and assigns investigation priority by assessing the degree of potential risk to the child.

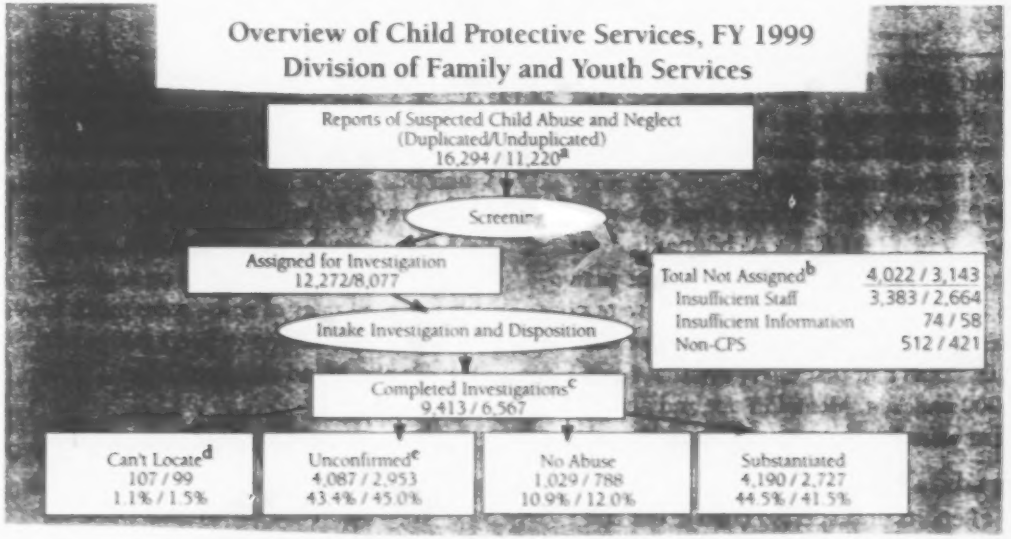
DFYS investigates most (over 70 percent in FY 1999) but not all reports it receives. DFYS cites lack of staff as the chief reason for not investigating some reports of abuse that it assesses as posing the lowest risk to children.

As the flow chart shows, DFYS received almost 16,300 duplicated reports of abuse in FY 1999 and 11,200 unduplicated reports. Duplicated reports include multiple reports of suspected abuse of the same child. Unduplicated counts include each child only once, even if there are several reports concerning the same child. The number of duplicated reports shows DFYS's workload; the unduplicated reports show the number of children who may have suffered abuse.

Not all reports of abuse are substantiated. The flow chart shows that of the investigations completed in FY 1999, about 42 to 45 percent involving more than 2,700 children and 4,200 reports were substantiated.

Another 45 percent of cases, involving nearly 3,000 children and more than 4,000 reports, were classified as "unconfirmed," which means that investigators found evidence of child abuse but not enough to meet DFYS's criteria for substantiating abuse.

In about 10 to 12 percent of cases in FY 1999, DFYS found no abuse, and in a few cases it couldn't locate the children who had been reported as abused.



[a] *Duplicated reports include more than one report of abuse of the same child. Unduplicated reports count each child only once.*

[b] *Some reports are not assigned for investigation because DFYS does not have sufficient staff to investigate all reports classified as low priority; some can't be assigned for lack of information; and some (non-CPS) are in fact not reports of child abuse but rather inquiries (like questions about food stamps) that DFYS records but refers to other divisions. The breakdowns of the "Not Assigned" cases are estimates.*

[c] *These are investigations completed in FY 1999. The number completed doesn't necessarily match the number assigned for investigation. Some reports assigned in FY 1999 may not have been completed that year – and some reports completed in FY 1999 may have been assigned in an earlier year.*

[d] *Agency can't locate child or family.* [e] *Cases that may show evidence of abuse but not enough to confirm.*

Source: *Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Family and Youth Services*

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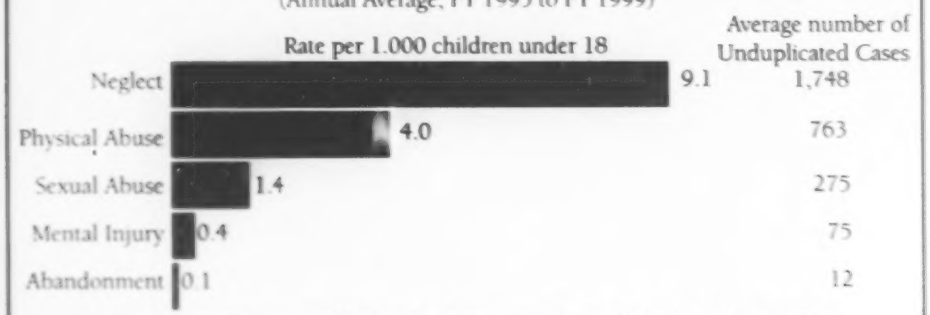
Substantiated Child Abuse and Neglect Among Alaskan Children, By Type of Abuse
(Annual Average, FY 1995 to FY 1999)



Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Family and Youth Services

Child Abuse by Type

Neglect was by far the most frequent type of substantiated child abuse in Alaska in the late 1990s. From fiscal year 1995 through 1999, DFYS found evidence that on average about 9 in 1,000 Alaskan children had been neglected each year. During the same period, an average of 4 per 1,000 children were physically abused each year. Sexual abuse occurred at less than half that rate—about 1.4 per 1,000 children. Mental injury and abandonment were uncommon.

Trends in Child Abuse

Reports of suspected child abuse and neglect varied little between FY95 and FY99, with DFYS receiving about 57 (unduplicated) reports of abuse for every 1,000 Alaskan children under 18. Rates of substantiated abuse were much lower and were also stable in the late 1990s. DFYS found evidence that parents or guardians had abused or neglected about 15 of every 1,000 children.

Child Abuse by Race

Rates of child abuse and neglect varied significantly by race in recent years. DFYS found that on average from FY 1995 through 1999, nearly 33 in 1,000 Alaska Native children and more than 21 in 1,000 Black children in the state were abused or neglected. Substantiated rates of abuse were much lower among White children (8 per 1,000) and Asian/Pacific Island children (6 per 1,000).

Alaska Native and Black children were most likely to be neglected, but rates of physical abuse among Native and Black children were also high. White and Asian children were neglected and physically abused at lower but about equal rates.

SUBSTANTIATED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT AMONG ALASKAN CHILDREN BY RACE AND TYPE OF ABUSE (ANNUAL AVERAGE FY 1995-99)

(Average Number Unduplicated Cases and Rate per 1,000 Children Under 18)

	Neglect		Physical Abuse		Sexual Abuse		Mental Injury		Abandonment		Total	
	#	Rate	#	Rate	#	Rate	#	Rate	#	Rate	#	Rate
White	502	3.8	363	2.7	125	0.9	37	0.3	5	n/a*	1,031	7.7
AK Native	1,003	23.7	246	5.8	101	2.4	27	0.6	6	n/a*	1,383	32.6
Black	117	12.9	62	6.8	14	1.5	6	n/a*	0.4	n/a*	198	21.8
Asian/PI	24	2.7	21	2.3	4	n/a*	1	n/a*	0	n/a*	51	5.6

* Rate not available because numbers of cases too small.

Source: Division of Family and Youth Services, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

TRENDS IN CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT FY 1995-FY99

(Number of Unduplicated Cases and Rates per 1,000 Children Under Age 18)

	FY95		FY96		FY97		FY98		FY99	
	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate
Reported	10,908	56.8	10,691	55.7	10,615	55.5	11,191	57.9	11,220	57.8
Not Assigned	4,120	-	3,589	-	3,452	-	3,186	-	3,143	-
Completed Investigations*	6,845	35.6	6,473	33.7	7,782	40.7	7,570	39.2	6,567	33.8
Substantiated	2,866	14.9	2,695	14.0	3,034	15.9	3,042	15.7	2,727	14.0
Unconfirmed	3,574	18.6	3,271	17.0	4,087	21.4	3,642	18.9	2,953	15.2
No Evidence of Abuse	351	1.8	436	2.3	571	3.0	773	4.0	788	4.1
Can't Locate	54	0.3	71	0.4	90	0.5	113	0.6	99	0.5

*Investigations completed in any given year may have begun in an earlier year.

Source: Division of Family and Youth Services, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

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PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

Among all the dangers children face as they grow up, child abuse is the most reprehensible. But Alaskans are fighting child abuse in a number of ways.

Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network

The Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network is a statewide coalition of non-profit organizations that works with the Alaska Children's Trust (a state government entity) and hundreds of community partners to make Alaskans more aware of ways to prevent child abuse and help families. Through four regional centers, the network serves as a clearinghouse for information on and resources for preventing child abuse.

Key Network Prevention Activities

Teleconferences: Four to six times a year the network hosts "Statewide Discussions on Prevention." These teleconferences include discussions across communities about the importance of efforts to prevent child abuse; about model family support programs and prevention initiatives; about opportunities to advocate for protection of children; and about issues facing children and families.

Statewide Media Campaign: The network, the Alaska Children's Trust, and the Alaska Public Radio Network collaborate in an ongoing radio campaign to promote community responsibility for preventing child abuse. Parents and community partners help write and review sample announcements and select messages. Announcements on ways to combat child abuse aired 3,000 times around the state in 2000.

Community Resource Kits: The network and the Alaska Children's Trust have developed Community Resource Kits that offer an array of information, ideas, and resources to use in the fight against child abuse. To get one you can call 1-800-643-KIDS or download a copy at: www.eed.state.ak.us/EarlyDev/trust/home.html

Newsletters, Newspaper columns, Website: www.ak.org/html/childabuseprevention.html The network uses these means to share prevention information, highlight model programs and key resources, describe upcoming training sessions, and promote increased community responsibility for child abuse prevention.

Parental Involvement: The network involves parents in all its activities. For example, parents take part in network teleconferences and serve as reviewers for public service announcements and the Community Resource Kit.

To get involved in the Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network:

Write to Marie J. Lavigne, Statewide Coordinator, Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network and Prevent Child Abuse, Alaska Chapter, at Anchorage Center for Families, 3745 Community Park Loop, Suite 102, Anchorage, AK 99508

Or call: 907/257-0305 or 1-888-701-0328; Statewide Parent Resource Line 1-800-CHILDREN

Or e-mail: prevention@acfonline.org

Alaska Children's Trust

The Alaska Children's Trust is a state government entity that raises money for and helps fund community-based programs to strengthen families and prevent child abuse. The trust began with a $6 million state appropriation in 1996, and by 1999 the trust account had grown to $9 million, through private donations and income reinvestment. The trust and the Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network work together closely, encouraging prevention of child abuse through community programs around Alaska.

A Community-Based Program: Intensive Home-Based Services

For most of the 1990s, Anchorage Center for Families has provided a program designed to help strengthen families, thereby reducing the number of children who are abused or who have to be taken out of their homes. The Intensive Home-Based Services Program sends workers into the homes of families with children who are either severely emotionally disturbed or who have been referred to the program by DFYS. These workers help families learn about and get access to services and resources available through the program or in the broader community.

In an evaluation of the program after its first year, a majority of families reported a number of improvements—including better social support, family interaction, and children's well-being. For more information about this program, get in touch with the Anchorage Center for Families.

Resources to Help Prevent Abuse

Below we list some of the organizations and programs the prevention network tracks. More information is available at: www.ak.org/html/childabuseprevention.html

AK Info Network: www.ak.org

Alaska Children's Trust:
www.eed.state.ak.us/EarlyDev/trust/home.html

Alaska Family Partnership (Fairbanks Native Association): www.alaskafamily.org/

Ak. Family Violence Prevention Clearinghouse
www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/mcfh/library.htm

Statistics on Reported Child Abuse In Alaska
www.hss.state.ak.us/dfys/stats/data.htm

Alaska Division of Family and Youth Services
www.hss.state.ak.us/dfys/

Foster A Future: Becoming A Foster Parent
www.hss.state.ak.us/foster/default1.htm

RID Alaska of Child Sexual Abuse: www.alaskanet/~rosenbau/NationalPrevention Resources

Admin. for Children and Families: www.acf.gov/

American Professional Society on Abuse of Children
http://www.apsac.org

Child Protection Clearinghouse
www.cssp.org/cpcintro.html

Children's Bureau Express Newsletter
www.calib.com/cbexpress/

Children, Youth and Family Consortium
www.cyfc.umn.edu/

Family Resource Coalition of America
www.frca.org

National Alliance for Children's Trust and Prevention Funds: www.msu.edu/user/millsda/index.html

National Child Abuse Prevention Network
child.cornell.edu

National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect
www.ndacan.cornell.edu/

National Indian Child Welfare Association
www.nicwa.org

Parents Anon.: www.parentsanonymous-natl.org/

Prevent Child Abuse America
www.preventchildabuse.org/index.html

Stop It Now (Child Sexual Abuse Prevention)
www.stopitnow.com/

Partnership Against Violence Network
www.pavnet.org/

Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention
www.shakenbaby.com

Shaken Baby Prevention Plus
members.aol.com/sbspp/sbspp.html

Resources for Parents and Caregivers

Especially for Parents: www.childrenhospitals.net/nachri/news/forparents.html

Family and Work Institute
www.familiesandworkinst.org/

Fathers and Family Link
fatherfamilylink.gse.upenn.edu/

I Am Your Child: www.iamyourchild.org

KidSource Online: Resources for Parents and Children: kidsource.com/

National Parent Consortium
www.natlparentconsortium.org/

National Parenting Center
www.natlparentconsortium.org/

National Parent Information Network
npin.org/index.html

Resources for Advocates

Child Welfare League of America: www.cwla.org

Children's Defense Fund: www.childrensdefense.org/

Coalition for America's Children: www.usakids.org/

Connect for Kids
www.connectforkids.org/in... ...tm

Federal Interagency Forum on Children and Family Statistics: www.childstats.gov/

Future of Children Journal
www.futureofchildren.org/index.htm

Handsnet: www.handsnet.org/

National Association of Child Advocates
www.childadvocacy.org

National Association of Counsel for Children
NACCchildlaw.org/

National Child Advocacy Center:
www.ncac-hsv.org/

Stand For Children: www.stand.org

CHILD INJURIES IN ALASKA

DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

Injury figures include physical injuries to Alaskan children (through age 19) that are serious enough to require medical attention or to cause death. Hospitalizations or deaths resulting from illnesses are excluded

Injuries to children can be either intentional or accidental—and many injuries of all kinds could be prevented. A big share of accidental injuries could be prevented through simple measures—like insuring that children wear bike helmets, flotation devices, seatbelts, and other safety devices—and by supervising small children more closely.

For example, the risk of head injury to children riding bicycles can be reduced as much as 85 percent if they wear properly-fastened helmets.[2] A 1997 study found that two thirds of children hit by cars were unsupervised at the time they were hurt.[3] And although a number of Alaskan children are accidentally hurt or killed by firearms every year, only one in four adults who owned firearms in 1999 said they had attended a firearm safety course within the previous three years.[4]

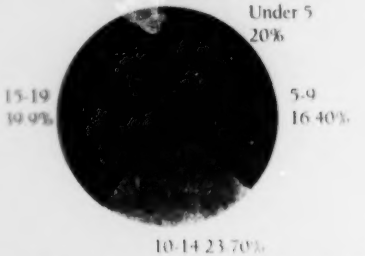
Many intentional injuries—including homicides and child abuse—could also be prevented. But the means of prevention are more complex.

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services reports that annually from 1994 through 1997, about one in four Alaskan children suffered injuries serious enough to require getting medical attention, missing school, or resting in bed.[5] Over that period, the department found:

- Accidents accounted for about 8 in 10 of the injuries that put Alaska children in the hospital—but more than 1 in 10 resulted from suicide attempts.
- Teenagers (15 to 19) were the likeliest to be hurt.
- Low-income Black and Native children living in urban environments were more likely than other children to sustain serious injuries.
- The three most prevalent non-fatal injuries were from falls, suicide attempts, and vehicle accidents.
- Alaska Natives account for about 22 percent of the state's children, but they sustained almost 41 percent of the serious and fatal injuries.

Unfortunately, some children who are injured die from those injuries. Of the 66 children (through age 17) who died in Alaska in 1998, about a third died from natural causes

Percent of Fatal and Serious Non-Fatal Injuries by Age, 19 and Under Alaska, 1994 - 1997

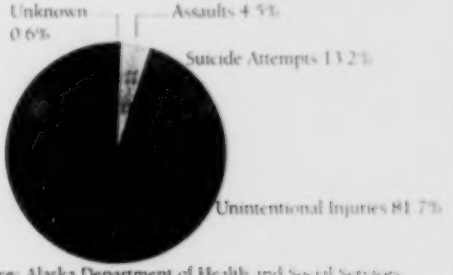


Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Section of Community Health and Emergency Medical Services

and the rest from injuries. The leading cause of injury deaths was vehicle accidents, followed by firearms. But one in five of the children who died in 1998 either committed suicide or were murdered. (See figure, page 43).

Injury rates—including both injuries that resulted in serious but not fatal injuries and those that were fatal—differed sharply within regions of Alaska in recent years. During the period from 1994 through 1997, the Northwest Arctic region saw the highest rates, with 21 in 1,000 children sustaining either serious or fatal injuries. At the other end of the spectrum was Anchorage, where about 1 in 1,000 children suffered serious or fatal injuries. As the figure on page 51 shows, suicides and suicide attempts took an especially heavy toll in the Northwest Arctic, Interior, and Norton Sound areas, but they also accounted for a substantial share of serious or fatal injuries in most regions. Falls accounted for a significant number of injuries and deaths in all regions.

Percent of Injury Hospitalizations by Type, Age 19 and Under, Alaska, 1994 - 1997



Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Section of Community Health and Emergency Medical Services

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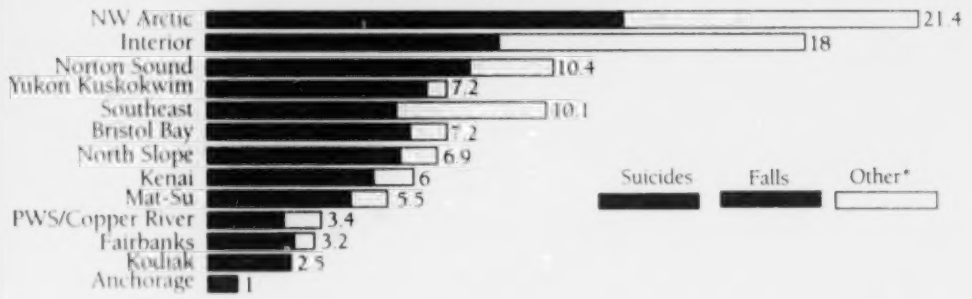
Fatal and Serious Non-Fatal Injury Rates Among Children, By Region 1994 - 1997
(Per 1,000 Ages 19 and Under)



*Includes injuries from motor vehicle accidents, all-terrain vehicle and snowmachine accidents, sports injuries, and cuts

Note: Rates shown only for those injuries that accounted for at least ten in an area in the four-year period and for which the rate was at least 5 per 10,000 population per year. In Anchorage, for example, there were certainly suicide attempts and other fatal and serious injuries, but not at high enough rates to show in this graph.

Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Section of Community Health and Emergency Medical Services

PREVENTING INJURIES

As the figure on page 43 shows, nearly one in ten children who died in Alaska in 1998 drowned. The State of Alaska is working to keep children safer on the water.

Kids Don't Float Program

The Alaska Kids Don't Float Program hopes to reduce the number of children who drown by educating teachers, parents, and others on the dangers of boating and other activities that draw children to the water. The program also loans flotation devices to boaters at many harbors and boat ramps in Alaska.

A group in Homer (on Kachemak Bay in Southcentral Alaska) established the program to fight the high numbers of children who drown in Alaska. It was named after a program in New York, "Kids Can't Fly," intended to prevent children from dying in falls.

For more information about this program, get in touch with the U.S. Coast Guard's boating safety office at (907) 463-2297, or the state Community Health and Emergency Medical Services at (907) 465-8631.

New Boating Legislation

Another step toward making children (and adults) safer on the water came in May 2000, when the state government created Alaska's first Boating Safety Program. Before that, Alaska was the only state in the nation without such a program. Alaska has an estimated 100,000 recreational boats and a rate of recreational boating fatalities 10 times the national average.

The law requires registration of all boats except those under 10 feet and without motors. Boats will have to meet Coast Guard standards and comply with regulations on maintaining safety equipment, carrying flotation devices, and reporting accidents.

CHILDREN AND SNOWMACHINES

In the past few years, Alaskans have also become increasingly aware of children and teenagers being hurt or killed in snowmachine-related accidents. In the winter of 2000, 23 people—including 3 teenagers—died in snowmachine-related accidents in Alaska. By February in the winter of 2001, another 21 people—including 3 teenagers under age 16—had died in snowmachine-related accidents in Alaska.[6]

An analysis of snowmachine-related deaths during the first half of the 1990s in several northern states with large numbers of snowmachines showed Alaska with by far the highest rate of death. Between 1990 and 1994, North Dakota, Maine, Wisconsin, and Minnesota had average rates of 0.2 or 0.3 snowmachine-related deaths per 100,000 people. Alaska's rate during that period averaged 2.2 snowmachine-related deaths per 100,000 people.[7]

And for every Alaskan who dies in a snowmachine accident, many more are hospitalized with snowmachine-related injuries. According to the Alaska Trauma Registry, 1,038 Alaskans were admitted to hospitals for snowmachine-related injuries between 1991 and 1997. Of those, 20 percent were children under the age of 18, with 42 children sustaining brain injuries and 2 spinal damage.[8]

Despite these injuries and deaths, the State of Alaska as of early 2001 has no minimum-age requirement for snowmachine drivers, no snowmachine speed limits, and no requirements for driver's education or safety training.

By contrast, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, New Hampshire, and Maine all have minimum-age requirements for snowmachine drivers. Michigan, Minnesota, and New Hampshire all require riders under the age of 18 to wear helmets. New Hampshire also requires children under 18 to wear eye protection. Of six northern states with large numbers of snowmachines, all except Alaska and Maine restrict snowmachine speeds.

Snowmachines are a primary means of winter transportation for rural Alaskans, and many urban Alaskans use snowmachines for recreation. But snowmachines are large and powerful and can easily reach speeds of more than 60 miles per hour. They typically are driven in areas with unpredictable conditions and unexpected hazards. The question for Alaskans is why we aren't better protecting children from the obvious dangers of snowmachines. We require automobile drivers to be 16 and to wear seatbelts. But we allow children of any age to drive snowmobiles, at any speed.

The Committee on Accident and Poison Prevention of the American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that children under 16 not be allowed to operate snowmachines, and that older drivers be required to take snowmachine safety courses and wear helmets.[9]

NOTES FOR CHILDREN IN DANGER

[1]Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Kids Count Data Book 2000*, page 27.

[2]Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Community Health and Emergency Medical Services. (October 1997). *Serious and Fatal Child and Adolescent Injuries in Alaska, 1991-1994*.

[3]K.E. Wills, R.R. Tanz, K.K. Christoffel, J.L. Schofer, J.V. Lavigne, M. Donovan, and K. Kalangis (1997). "Supervision in childhood injury cases: A reliable taxonomy" in *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 29(1), 133-137.

[4]Alaska Department of Health and Social Services and U.S. Centers for Disease Control, *Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 1999*.

[5]Data from Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Section of Community Health and Emergency Medical Services.

[6]*Anchorge Daily News*, "Snowmachine toll nears record," January 16, 2001 and "Snowmobile Perils: An Anchorage Daily News special report," April 16-19, 2000.

[7]M.G. Landen, J. Middaugh,and A.L. Dannenberg (1999). "Injuries associated with snowmobiles, Alaska, 1990-1994" in *Public Health Reports*, 114, 48-52.

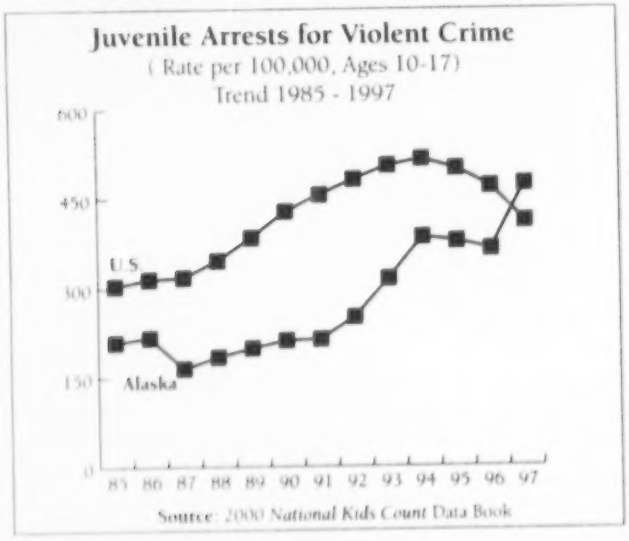
[8]Data provided by Alaska Trauma Registry, Section of Community Health and Emergency Medical Services, Division of Public Health, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.

[9]American Academy of Pediatrics (1998). Policy Statement (RE8129) in *Pediatrics*, 82(5), 789-799.

Juvenile Crime in Alaska

October to April is a long time. But there is a great compensation. Spring in the North comes with a leap and a shout and a surge of excitement.

Margaret E. Murie, *Two In The Far North*
Originally published 1957; Reissued 1978,
Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing Company



DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

This section shows two measures of juvenile crime, based on different sources and definitions. The trend graph above shows the rate of arrests for violent crime (homicide, manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) among persons 10-17, in Alaska and on average nationwide.[1] Those figures are reported by the national *Kids Count* program and are based on adjusted data from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Other tables and figures in this section are based on data from the Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice in the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. They reflect police reports to the juvenile justice system. They include all reports of juvenile crime in Alaska—both violent and other. Keep in mind that while these police reports are the best measure we have of "juvenile crime," a report is not the same as proof of guilt.

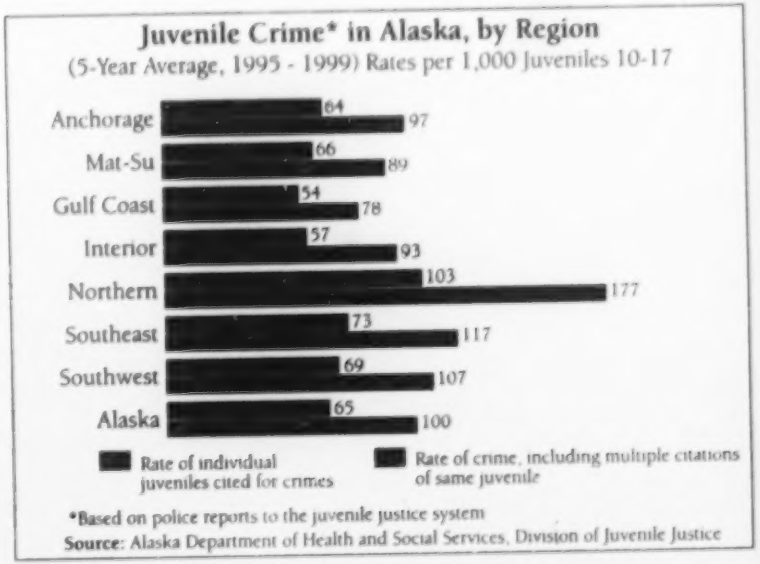
Almost all the juveniles who go through the state's juvenile justice system are ages 10-17.[2] The adjacent trend graph (based on federal statistics) shows that after climbing sharply both nationwide and in Alaska between 1987 and 1994, the rate of violent crime among teenagers leveled off in the mid-1990s. But in 1997, violent juvenile crime in Alaska jumped, while continuing to drop nationwide. So for the first time, the rate of violent juvenile crime in Alaska was above the national average.

Remember, however, that because Alaska's population is small—there are only about 86,000 persons ages 10-17—a relatively small change in the number of juveniles committing crimes can make a noticeable change in the rate of crime in a given year. Figures for the next few years will tell us if the 1997 number was an anomaly.

On average, the Division of Juvenile Justice in the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services received about 8,400 reports of juvenile crime in Alaska each year between FY 1995 and FY 1999. The rate of individual juveniles cited in crime reports during that period was 65 per 1,000. Looked at another way, police referred about 6.5 percent of Alaska's juveniles to the juvenile justice system. The rate of juvenile crime (which counts multiple referrals of the same juvenile) was 100 per 1,000—or about 10 per 100 juveniles.

Rates of reported juvenile crime were highest in the Northern and Southeast regions and lowest along the Gulf Coast.

Crimes against property were by far the most frequent type of juvenile crime throughout Alaska in the late 1990s, making up more than half of all juvenile crime. Crimes against persons made up about 17 percent of juvenile crime statewide, but more than 26 percent in the Southwest region. Violations of drug and alcohol laws accounted for about 12 percent of juvenile crime statewide, but nearly 17 percent in the Southeast region. Other kinds of juvenile


Juvenile Crime* in Alaska, by Region
(5-Year Average, 1995 - 1999) Rates per 1,000 Juveniles 10-17
Anchorage 64 97
Mat-Su 66 89
Gulf Coast 54 78
Interior 57 93
Northern 103 177
Southeast 73 117
Southwest 69 107
Alaska 65 100
Rate of individual juveniles cited for crimes
Rate of crime, including multiple citations of same juvenile
*Based on police reports to the juvenile justice system
Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice

crime—including violations of weapons laws and public order laws—accounted for another 17 percent of reported juvenile crimes statewide.

Boys in Alaska and across the U.S. are much more likely to commit crimes than are girls. Nearly three quarters (72 percent) of the juveniles referred to the Division of Juvenile Justice from 1995 through 1999 were boys.

The table at the bottom of the page shows reported juvenile crime by race and region in recent years. A current breakdown of the juvenile population by race and region is not available right now—so we can't say precisely how the share of juveniles of each race referred to the justice system compares with their share in the total population of juveniles.

But we do have a breakdown of the entire Alaska population by race and region (see table on page 57), and that helps us estimate whether juveniles of any race are cited in a disproportionately larger or smaller share of crime reports.

In general, Native and Black juveniles appear to be cited at disproportionately higher rates, compared with their representation in the population, and White and Asian juveniles at lower rates.

However, we know that the Alaska Native population is young—so while Natives make up about 17 percent of the overall Alaska population, they make up more than 21 percent of the population ages 10-17. So comparing shares of the total population by race to shares of reported juvenile crime by race is

ANNUAL POLICE REPORTS[a] OF JUVENILE (10-17) CRIME BY REGION AND TYPE OF CRIME
(5-Year Average, FY 1995-1999)

Region	Crimes Against Persons		Crimes Against Property		Drug/Alcohol Laws		Other[b]		Total[c]	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Anchorage	452	14.5%	16,931	54.2%	271	8.7%	707	22.6%	3,123	100%
Mat-Su	433	16.9	454	57.5	98	12.4	104	13.2	789	100
Gulf Coast	157	18.8	455	54.6	117	14.1	104	12.5	834	100
Interior	221	18.3	626	52.0	176	14.6	182	15.1	1,205	100
Northern	120	17.9	369	55.2	62	9.3	118	17.6	669	100
Southeast	207	17.6	612	52.1	197	16.8	157	13.4	1,174	100
Southwest	158	26.3	289	48.1	68	11.3	86	14.8	601	100
Alaska	**1,449**	**17.3**	**4,499**	**53.6**	**990**	**11.8**	**1,458**	**17.4**	**8,396**	**100**

[a] Reports police send to probation officers, who then investigate. These are duplicate counts–meaning they include more than one reported crime by the same juvenile; duplicated counts show the overall level of reported juvenile crime.

[b] Includes violations of public order laws, weapons laws, and miscellaneous other offenses.

[c] Average annual number of crimes.

Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice.

POLICE REPORTS OF JUVENILES* (AGES 10-17) COMMITTING CRIMES, BY RACE AND REGION
(Percentages FY 1995-1999)

Region	Native	Black	White	Asian/Pacific Isl.	Hispanic and Other	Total Number Juveniles Committing Crimes
Anchorage	14.2%	14.2%	60.4%	5.6%	5.6%	10,284
Mat-Su	7.2	1.5	88.0	0.3	3.0	2,652
Gulf Coast	12.0	1.2	76.7	5.5	4.6	2,922
Interior	27.9	9.8	56.7	0.8	4.8	3,706
Northern	89.5	0.6	4.4	1.2	4.2	1,952
Southeast	33.1	1.0	47.9	1.7	16.4	3,686
Southwest	89.1	0.4	8.6	0.2	1.8	1,959
Alaska	**28.5%**	**7.2%**	**54.9%**	**3.2%**	**6.2%**	**27,161**

*Unduplicated reports of juvenile crime–which means juveniles who are cited in more than one crime report show up only once in the numbers.

Note: Percentages may total slightly more or less than 100 because of rounding.

Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice.

not completely accurate. When the results of the 2000 federal census are available, we will have accurate figures for juvenile populations by race and region.

PREVENTING JUVENILE CRIME

What can we do to keep children and teenagers from committing crimes?

The Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice tries to prevent or reduce juvenile crime through "restorative justice." This means it tries to hold juveniles accountable for their crimes; to protect the public; to restore victims and communities; and to provide juvenile offenders with services (like treatment for drug use) that will make them more responsible and less likely to commit crimes. Future *Kids Count Alaska* data books will discuss some of Alaska's juvenile justice programs.

Recent national studies of the problem of juvenile crime offer a number of suggestions:

- Families, schools, and communities need to stop juvenile crime early on by teaching children solid values; intervening strongly the first time a child gets into trouble; and following through to make sure that children face the consequences of their decisions.[3]
- Opening boys and girls clubs in public housing can reduce juvenile crime. A three-year study by Columbia University of the Boys and Girls Clubs of America found that juvenile crime dropped 13 percent in public housing areas after clubs opened.[4]
- Boys who have a history of being physically aggressive in school are more likely to commit crimes, according to research. Schools could help head off crimes by initiating elementary-school programs to teach children better ways of resolving conflicts, as well as programs that prevent aggressive students from intimidating or hurting other students.[5]
- The National Council on Crime and Delinquency has found that to prevent juvenile offenders from continuing to commit crimes, it is more effective to establish "small, very intensive programs" that are coupled with "integrated community-based systems" rather than to simply sentence them to juvenile or adult correction facilities.[6]

ALASKA POPULATION BY RACE AND REGION, 1999

	White	Native	Black	Asian/Pacific Islander
Anchorage	77.2%	8.1%	7.3%	7.3%
Mat-Su	92.4%	5.8%	1.0%	0.8%
Gulf Coast	83.5%	10.5%	0.8%	5.3%
Interior	79.2%	11.6%	6.8%	2.4%
Northern	20.7%	74.5%	0.7%	4.1%
Southeast	75.1%	19.9%	0.7%	4.3%
Southwest	20.4%	75.8%	0.4%	3.4%
Alaska	**73.7%**	**16.8%**	**4.4%**	**5.0%**

Persons of Hispanic origin can be of any race.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, Demographics Unit.

Note: These are percentage breakdowns of the total Alaska population. The proportions of juveniles by region would be somewhat different, especially in the Northern and Southwest regions, where most residents are Alaska Natives. That's because the proportions of children and teenagers are higher among Natives.

NOTES FOR JUVENILE CRIME

[1] Some states do not collect complete or comparable data on violent juvenile crime, so this indicator is not available for all states.

[2] Juveniles who commit certain violent crimes are charged as adults and go through the court system rather than the juvenile justice system; numbers of juveniles tried as adults are very small.

[3] State of California, Little Hoover Commission. (September 1994). *The Juvenile Crime Challenge: Making Prevention a Priority.* Report # 127. Available: www.lhc.ca.gov/lhcdir/127rp.html

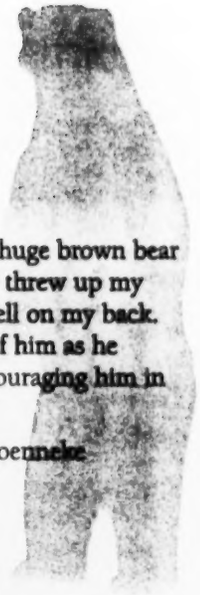
[4] Bureau of Justice Assistance Fact Sheet: Boys and Girls Clubs of America. (October 1995). Available: www.ncjrs.org/txtfiles/b-gclubs.txt

[5] Alaska Youth Data Project. *Youth Clips*, Volume II, Issue 5.

[6] *Kids Count* in Indiana, Indiana Youth Institute. (1996). *Juvenile Justice in Indiana: Facing what works and what doesn't.* Page 36.

Health Risks

Youth Risk Behavior Survey



I broke out into the willows that grew around the edges of the cottonwoods. . . . A huge brown bear was coming head on, bounding through the willow clumps not fifty feet away! . . .I threw up my arms and yelled. That was all I could think to do. On he came . . . . I tripped and fell on my back. And then as he loomed over me, a strange thing happened. The air swooshed out of him as he switched ends. Off he went . . . . Never once did he look back. I was shouting, encouraging him in his flight.

Sam Keith, from the journals of Richard Proenneke
One Man's Wilderness
Published 1973; Reissued 1999
Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Books

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DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

Since 1990, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have sponsored the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) at both the national and state levels. The survey asks middle- and high-school students questions about a broad range of health issues: use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs; sexual behavior; diet and physical activity; and behaviors (like fighting and carrying weapons) that could cause serious injury.

The survey is an excellent source of data on health risks among adolescents, allowing comparisons among states and with national averages and tracking changes over time.

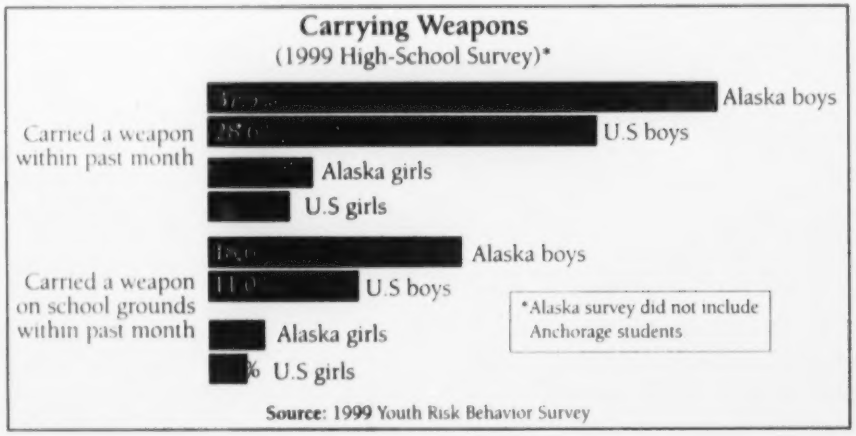
In Alaska, the survey is a joint project of the state departments of Health and Social Services and Education and Early Development. Alaska has conducted the survey only twice—in 1995 and 1999. However, in 1999 the Anchorage School District (by far the largest district in the state) decided not to take part in the survey.

Anchorage's decision not to take part means that we can't compare Alaska's 1995 and 1999 survey findings. The data reported here are from a sample of 1,427 high-school students throughout Alaska, except in Anchorage. Also, since the response from middle schools was below what is considered a reliable level, we report only the high-school results. When reading these results, keep in mind that Anchorage (with roughly 40 percent of the state's high-school students) did not take part in the survey.

The entire report is available online at: www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/publications.shtml

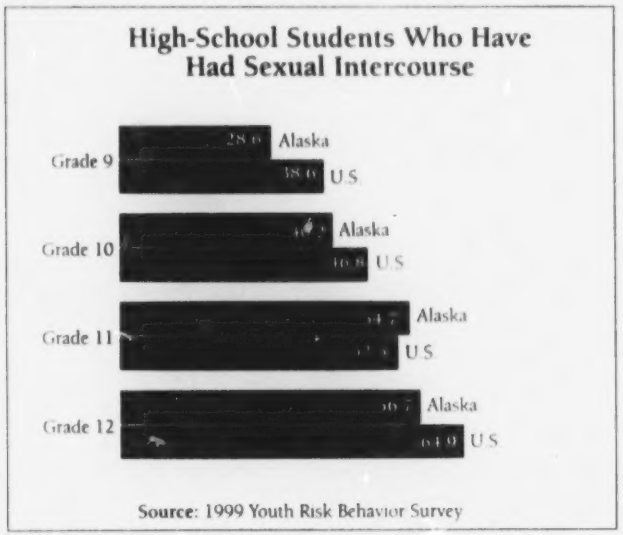
Carrying Weapons

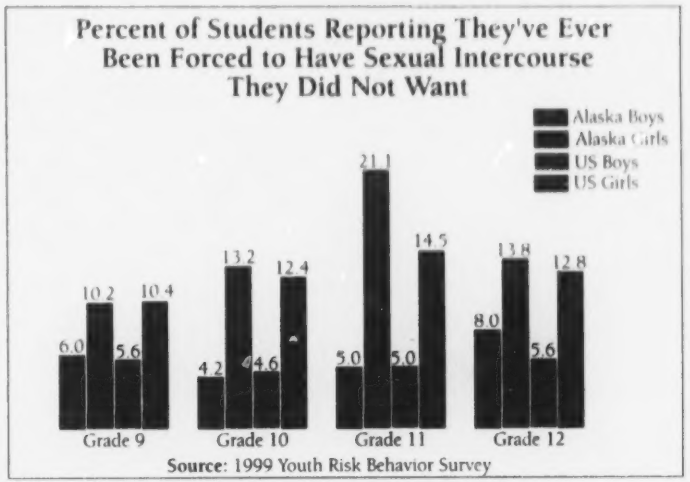
- High-school boys surveyed in Alaska were more likely to report carrying weapons in general and on school grounds in particular during the previous month. Nearly 38 percent of Alaska high-school boys said they had carried weapons and 18 percent said they had carried weapons on school grounds. That compares with 29 percent of boys nationwide carrying weapons in general and 11 percent on school grounds.
- High-school girls in Alaska were slightly more likely than girls nationwide to carry weapons in the previous month. About 8 percent of Alaska girls and 6 percent of girls nationwide reported carrying weapons; about 4 percent of Alaska girls and 3 percent of girls nationwide carried weapons to school.



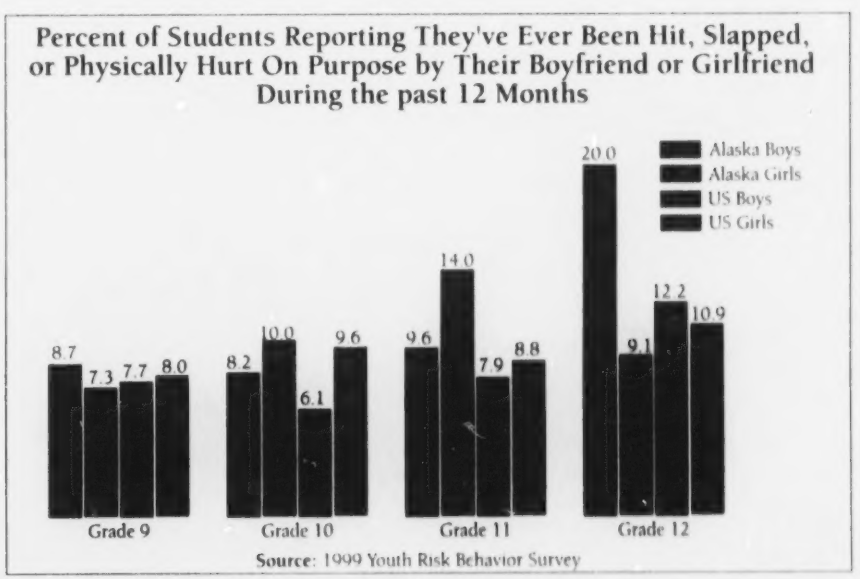
Sexual Intercourse and Violence

- By ninth grade, nearly 30 percent of Alaska high-school students report having sexual intercourse, and that share climbs to nearly 60 percent by twelfth grade. High-school students nationwide—especially younger students—are somewhat more likely to report having intercourse.
- A staggering number of high-school girls in both Alaska and the entire U.S. report being forced to have sexual intercourse at some time. Nearly one in 10 Alaska girls in ninth grade and one in five girls in eleventh grade report being forced to have sex.
- A significant but much smaller share of high-school boys in Alaska and nationwide also report having been forced to have sex—between 5 and 8 percent at different grade levels.
- About 10 percent of the girls and 12 percent of the boys surveyed in Alaskan high schools reported being hit, slapped, or otherwise hurt in the previous year by people they were dating. A figure that particularly stands out is that in twelfth grade, one in five Alaska boys surveyed said their girlfriends had purposefully hit them.



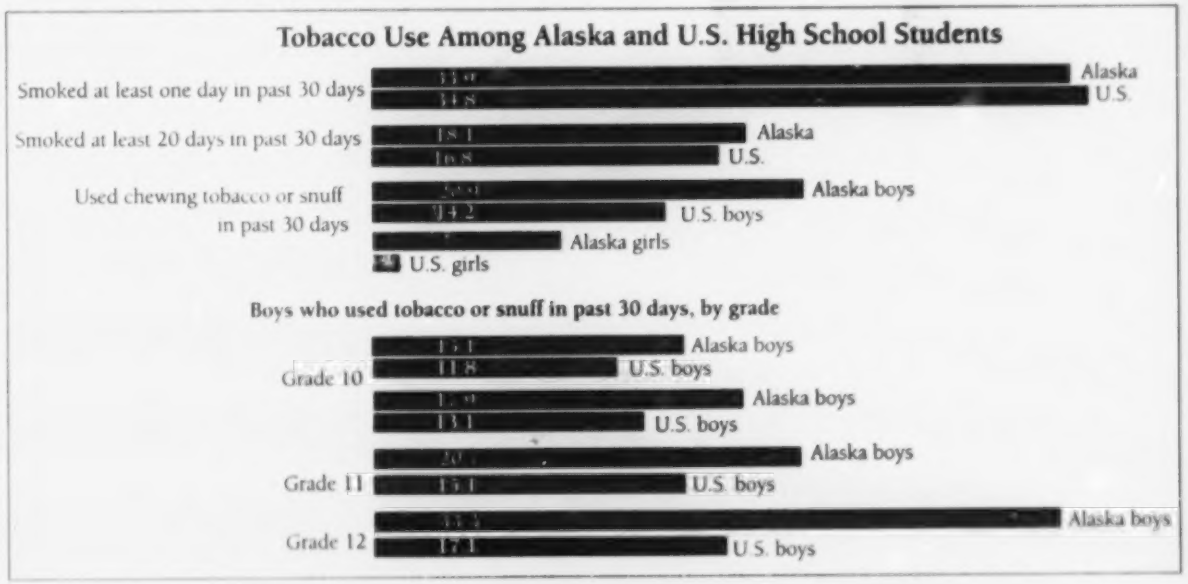


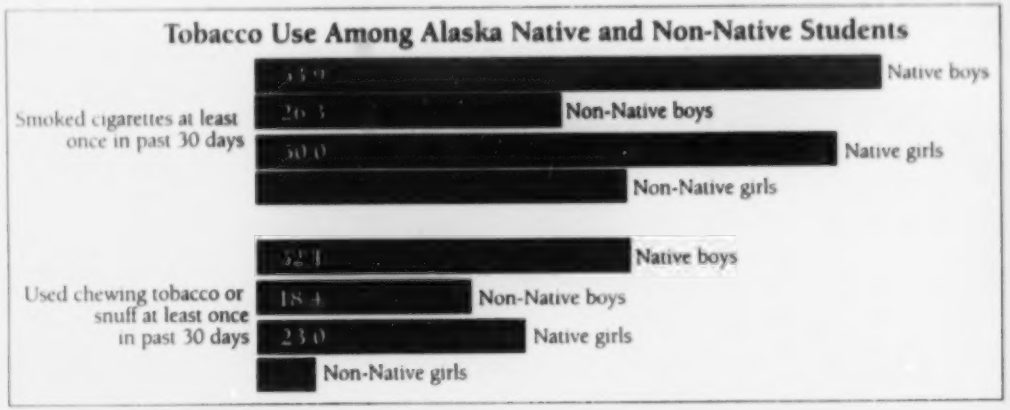
Alaska survey did not include Anchorage high-school students.

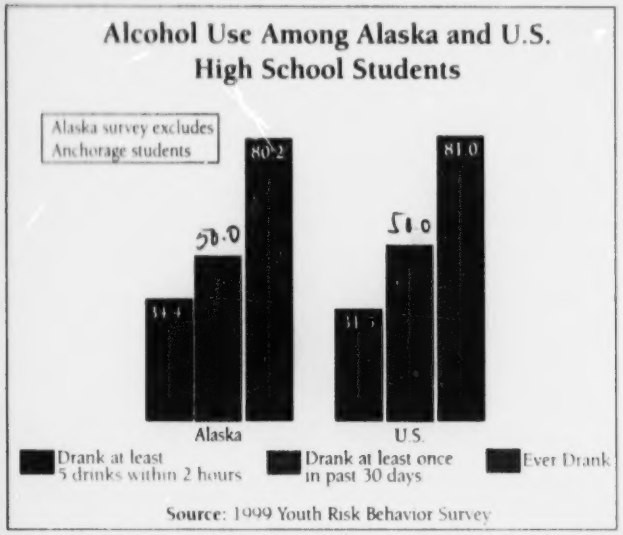


Tobacco Use

- Smoking is about equally common among Alaskan and U.S. high-school students, with roughly a third reporting they smoked at least once in the month before the survey.
- Alaska's high-school students are far more likely than other U.S. students to chew tobacco or use snuff. Alaskan girls in particular are more likely than other girls to chew tobacco. About 21 percent of Alaskan boys said they had used chewing tobacco in the month before the survey, compared with about 14 percent nationwide. But nearly 10 percent of Alaskan high-school girls—almost 1 in 10—said they chewed tobacco, compared with just 1 percent —1 in 100—girls nationwide.
- The share of high-school boys nationwide and in Alaska who chew tobacco increases as they get older. But among Alaskan high-school boys surveyed, use increases much more—so that by the twelfth grade, a third of Alaska boys report chewing tobacco. That's nearly twice the rate among senior boys nationwide.
- Alaska Native students—both boys and girls—are far more likely to smoke or chew tobacco than are non-Natives. More than half of Native boys and girls reported that they currently smoked, compared with 26 percent of non-Native boys and 32 percent of non-Native girls. Nearly double the share of Native boys (32 percent) as non-Native boys (18 percent) chew tobacco. And the share of Native girls who chew (24 percent) is nearly five times the rate among non-Native girls (5 percent).

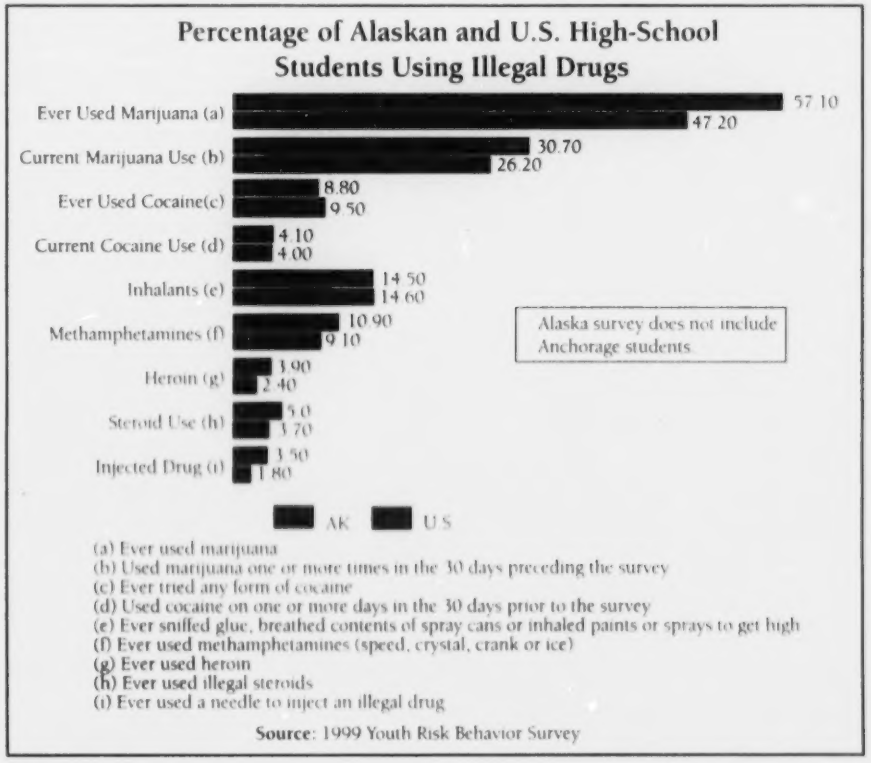






Drug and Alcohol Use

- About the same percentages of Alaskan and U.S. high-school students drink alcohol. Eight out of 10 high school students surveyed in Alaska and the U.S. reported that they have tried alcohol at least once, and about half said they had drunk at least once in the month before the survey. A third reported binge drinking in the month before the survey.
- Marijuana is the most commonly used illegal drug among high-school students in both Alaska and the U.S.—but a bigger share of Alaskan teenagers use marijuana. About 57 percent of Alaskan teens and 47 percent of U.S. teens report using marijuana at least once; 31 percent of Alaska students and 27 percent of U.S. teens reported using marijuana in the month before the survey.
- Close to one in six high-school students in both Alaska and the U.S. report sniffing glue or other inhalants at least once.
- After marijuana, methamphetamines and cocaine are the most widely-used illegal drugs among high-school students, with nearly 1 in 10 reporting at least one use.
- A bigger share of Alaskan high-school students than other U.S. students report trying herion —almost 4 in 100 Alaskan students, compared with just over 2 in 100 nationwide.
- Five in 100 Alaskan high-school students have used steroids, compared with fewer than 4 in 100 nationwide.
- More than 3 in 100 Alaskan students surveyed report using needles to inject drugs at least once—a share twice as large as among U.S. students in general.

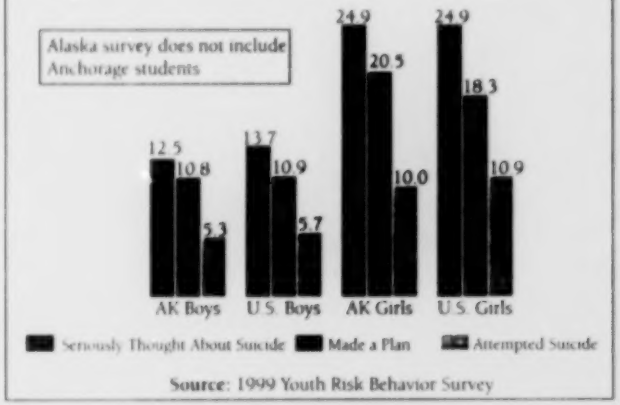

Percentage of Alaskan and U.S. High-School Students Using Illegal Drugs
Ever Used Marijuana (a) 57.10 47.20
Current Marijuana Use (b) 30.70 26.20
Ever Used Cocaine(c) 8.80 9.50
Current Cocaine Use (d) 4.10 4.00
Inhalants (e) 14.50 14.60
Methamphetamines (f) 10.90 9.10
Heroin (g) 3.90 2.40
Steroid Use (h) 5.0 3.70
Injected Drug (i) 3.50 1.80
Alaska survey does not include Anchorage students
AK
U.S
(a) Ever used marijuana
(b) Used marijuana one or more times in the 30 days preceding the survey
(c) Ever tried any form of cocaine
(d) Used cocaine on one or more days in the 30 days prior to the survey
(e) Ever sniffed glue, breathed contents of spray cans or inhaled paints or sprays to get high
(f) Ever used methamphetamines (speed, crystal, crank or ice)
(g) Ever used heroin
(h) Ever used illegal steroids
(i) Ever used a needle to inject an illegal drug
Source: 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Suicide Thoughts and Attempts

As we saw in the section on injuries to children (pages 50-52), rates of suicide and attempted suicide are disconcertingly high among Alaska's teenagers, especially in northern and southwest Alaska. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey asked high-school students in Alaska and nationwide whether they had thought about or attempted suicide. The adjacent figure shows that:

- The shares of high-school students who have thought about, planned, or attempted suicide are remarkably similar in Alaska and across the country.
- High-school girls are far more likely than boys to report thinking about or attempting suicide. (However, Alaska statistics tell us that teenage boys—especially Alaska Native boys—are far more likely than girls to actually commit suicide.[1])
- A surprising one in four high school girls surveyed in both Alaska and the U.S. said they had thought seriously about committing suicide. Approximately one in five said they had made plans to kill themselves, and roughly one in ten had actually attempted suicide.
- Among Alaska boys, 12.5 percent said they had thought seriously about committing suicide, 11 percent said they had made plans, and 5 percent had attempted suicide. Rates are similar among U.S. boys, although slightly more (13.7 percent) reported having suicidal thoughts.

Alaska and U.S. Students Reporting Suicide Thoughts, Plans, and Attempts
(In Percentages)



Source: 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Discussion About Survey Results

The 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey in Alaska found that many high-school students are doing just fine, not putting their health or their lives at risk. But a significant number are doing dangerous things.. And some report that fellow students have hurt them, scared them, or forced them to do things against their will.

A staggering one in five girls in the eleventh grade report being forced to have sexual intercourse they did not want. More than half of all Alaska Native students surveyed reported regularly smoking cigarettes. Nearly one in five high-school boys reported carrying weapons on school grounds. More than three in one hundred students surveyed said they had injected drugs with needles.

Parents, schools, and communities need to find better ways to keep teenagers safe. Alaska has taken steps to curb teenage smoking by sharply increasing cigarette taxes and better enforcing laws against selling cigarettes to minors. Preliminary research shows that these changes may be helping.[2]

In recent years Alaska schools have been more vigilant about trying to keep weapons out and to show that they won't tolerate fighting. Students who don't fight or carry weapons or intimidate other students need to be better protected from those who do. And violent students should not only be disciplined, but helped to change their behavior.

We need to find better ways of protecting teenagers—especially girls but boys as well— from being pressured or physically forced to have sexual relations they don't want. We need active efforts to prevent assaults and so-called "date rape."

The good news from the survey is that most high-school students are on their way to being responsible, productive adults. We need to find more ways to help all students make the most of their lives.

Notes for Health Risks Section

[1] See Matthew Berman and Linda Leask, "Violent Death in Alaska," in *Alaska Review of Social and Economic Conditions*, University of Alaska Anchorage, Institute of Social and Economic Research, February 1994.

[2] See Alaska Department of Revenue and Health and Social Services, *Impact of the 1997 Tobacco Tax Rate Increase in Alaska*, June 2000. Available online at: www.hss.state.ak.us

Conclusion

Family Resources
Documentation of Indicators

Whiteout is a cessation of depth perception, and near every other kind of perception, caused by a certain combination of snow cover, cloud cover, and diffused light from the snow. All at once, there is no horizon. Snow and sky are the same, and the whole world becomes an off-white.

Slim Randles, *Dogsled*
New York: Winchester Press, 1976

BOOKS

James Garbarino. *Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them*. Free Press: New York, 1999.
Describes methods to keep boys from becoming violent.

William J. Bennett, Chester E. Finn, and John T. Cribb. *The Educated Child: A Parent's Guide from Preschool through Eighth Grade*. Free Press: New York, 1999.
A guide for parents and teachers.

Linda Acredolo and Susan Goodwyn. *Baby Signs: How to Talk with Your Baby Before Your Baby Can Talk*. NTC Publishing Group: Chicago, 1996.
An illustrated guide to help parents communicate with infants.

T. Berry Brazelton. *Touchpoints: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development*. Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.: Reading, MA, 1992.
A handbook of infant and early child development.

Jane Nelsen, Cheryl Erwin, and Roslyn Duff. *Positive Discipline for Preschoolers*, Second Edition. Prima Communications, Inc.: Roseville, CA, 1999.
Tools for teaching children to be responsible, respectful, and resourceful.

Gavin de Becker. *Protecting the Gift: Keeping Children and Teenagers Safe (and Parents Sane)*. Dell Publishing: Westminster, MD, 1999.

PHONE

Child Care Aware, 1-800-424-2246
Refers parents to licensed and accredited child care centers nationwide. Weekdays 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Central Standard Time (CST).

ChildHelp National Hotline, 1-800-4-A-Child
24-hour-a-day advice from counselors with graduate degrees.

National Parent Information Network, 1-800-583-4135
Answers, at no charge, from the country's largest database on parenting. Weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., CST.

Single-Parents Association, 800-704-2102
Refers parents to local resources and answers questions about parenting issues. Weekdays, 9 a.m.-6 p.m. CST

INTERNET

http://child.cornell.edu
The Child Abuse Prevention Network; a worldwide center for professionals in the field of preventing child abuse and neglect.

http://www.singleparents.org
Single-Parents Association. An international, nonprofit organization.

http://www.familiesandwork.org
Site of the Families and Work Institute

http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/default.htm
The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; works to reduce disease, disability, and death, as well as costs associated with injuries.

http://www.health.org
A national clearinghouse for information on alcohol and drugs.

http://www.nccic.org
The National Child Care Information Center promotes links between and supports comprehensive services for children and families.

http://www.childadvocacy.org/intro.html
The National Association of Child Advocates helps build the capacity of state and local organizations that advocate for children.

http://www.naeyc.org
The National Association for the Education of Young Children.

http://www.aecf.org
Website of the Annie E. Casey Foundation

http://www.ncjrs.org
The Justice Information Center

http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

http://www.cdc.gov/nip
National Immunization Program Web site

http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp
National Center for Children in Poverty

http://www.healthystart.net
Healthy Start National Resource Center

http://www.teenpregnancy.org
National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Indicator	What Indicator Measures	Source	Years Available	Geographic Breakdown	Gender Breakdown	Race Breakdown	Age Breakdown
Prenatal Care	Share of mothers in Alaska receiving inadequate prenatal care	Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics	80-97	*	All Years	All Years	89-97 only
Babies with Low Birth Weight	Percentage of babies weighing less than 5.5 pounds at birth	Casey Foundation; Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics	80-97	*	All Years	All Years	89-97 only
Infant Mortality	Deaths among infants under age 1	Casey Foundation; Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics	77-97	*	All Years	All Years	All Years
Children Living in Poverty	Children in families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold	Casey Foundation; Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics	80-96	Regional odd years	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
Children Whose Parents Lack Full-time, Year-Round Employment	Percentage of children under age 18 living with parents who don't have full-time, year-round employment	Casey Foundation	90-99	Not Available	N/A	N/A	N/A
Families Headed by Single Parents	Percentage of families headed by single parents with children	Casey Foundation; U.S. Census Bureau	80-97	Regional 80 and 90	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
Births to Teens	Births among teenage girls 15-19	Casey Foundation; Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics	80-98	*	All Years	All Years	All Years
High-School Dropouts	Teens (16-19) who are not in school and have not graduated	Casey Foundation; Alaska Department of Education and Early Development	80-97	School Districts	80,90	80,90	80,90
Teens Not in School and Not Working	Teens (16-19) not in school and without jobs	Casey Foundation	80-97	Not Available	All Years	All Years	All Years

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Indicator	What Indicator Measures	Source	Years Available	Geographic Breakdown	Gender Breakdown	Race Breakdown	Age Breakdown
School Achievement	Achievement test scores of Alaskan students in 4th, 8th, and 11th grades	AlaskaDepartment of Education and Early Development	95-99	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	By grades
Child Death Rate	Deaths among children 1-14	Casey Foundation Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics	77-97	*	All Years	All Years	All Years
Teen Violent Death Rate	Deaths from homicides, suicides, and accidents among teens 15-19	Casey Foundation; Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics	77-97	*	All Years	All Years	All Years
Child Abuse and Neglect	Reported and substantiated cases of child abuse among Alaska children under age 18	Alaska Division of Family and Youth Services	92-99	Not Available	All Years	All Years	All Years
Child Injuries	Alaskan children seriously injured or killed, by all causes	Alaska Divison of Public Health, Section of Comm. and Emergency Medical Services	94-97	Regions	94-97	94-97	94-97
Juvenile Crime in Alaska	Arrests of juveniles 10-17 for violent crimes; Police referrals to DFYS of juveniles under 18	Casey Foundation; U.S. Census Bureau Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice	85-99	*	All Years	All Years	All Years
Health Risks	Prevalence of smoking and other behavior that risks health of high-school students	Youth Risk Behavior Survey; Alaska Departments of Health and Social Services and Education and Early Development	95 and 99	Not Available	95 and 99	95 and 99	By grades

*Indicator is available for *Kids Count* regions, boroughs, and census areas—but sometimes census area figures are too small to be meaningful.

Note: The Alaska Department of Labor provided statewide and regional population figures that we used to calculate 5-year average rates of indicators for Alaska and for its regions.

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Last night I saw streaks in the sky to the north. I put on my cold-weather clothes and went out to watch the show. It was the best I have seen. A waving curtain of green hung over the country, spreading large one moment and shrinking small the next. Streaks of red, yellow, and green shot like searchlight beams to a point overhead. . . . All alone in the subzero cold, with the heavens on fire and the ice cracking and crashing around me. A savage scene, and one to remember.

Sam Keith, from the journals of Richard Proenneke
One Man's Wilderness
Originally published 1973; Reissued 1999
Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Books